

# *ETHICS, EDUCATION, INDIAN UNITY AND CULTURE*

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*K.Satchidananda Murty*

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UNITY AND CULTURE**

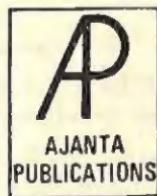
Addresses in Universities from Kashi to Kashmir  
1980-89  
Some Excerpts

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K. SATCHIDANANDA MURTY

1991



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"The university should symbolise the essential unity of the country and the plurality of its cultural heritage."

**R. VENKATARAMAN**  
*President of India*  
14 XII 1989

*Dedicated*  
*To*  
**MY WISE AND GOOD FRIENDS**

The Late Pandit Badarinatha Shukla (Varanasi)  
The Late Professor Mushirul Haq (Srinagar/New Delhi)

and

Professor Marietta Stepaniants (Moscow)

Dr. Sc. Hiltrud Rüstau (Berlin)

Mrs. Margarita Gеорчева (Sofia)

Professor Dr. Günter Heidorn (Berlin)

Mr. Bernd Biedermann (Berlin)

Professor Desikottama Wu Bai-hui (Beijing)

Professor Huang Xin Chuang (Beijing)

Dr. Sergei N. Kamenev (Moscow)

Mr. S.I. Tcholakov (Sofia)

Manishinah santi na te hitaishino,  
hitaishinah santi na te manishinah;

Suhrueca vidvanapi durlabho nrunam,  
yathaushadham svadu hitam ca durlabham.

— An Ancient Sanskrit Subhashita

There are wise persons, but they may not be well-wishers; there  
are well-wishers, but they may not be wise persons. For anyone  
a good friend who is also wise is a rarity like a medicine which  
is sweet as well as beneficial.

— A fine old Sanskrit Saying

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## *Preface*

Between September 1980 and September 1989 I had the opportunity to visit, by invitation, a number of Indian universities\* and deliver in them several lectures, convocation addresses etc. Portions from some of them are brought together in this small book. Much of what is contained in the following pages is concerned with these : the good life, values and virtue; universities and studies in them; higher education in India; Indian culture and unity; the problems of diversity of cultures and plurality of religions and the issue of possible exclusive superiority of any one of them; political, institutional and personal autonomy and freedom; and tradition: its perennial importance and contemporary relevance. The analytical table of Contents will give a synoptic idea of what has been said in these addresses/lectures.

I am grateful to the authorities of all the universities which, over several years, invited me and extended generous hospitality to me.

Besides these I spoke in quite a number of other universities extempore on matters of general interest, but as records of those speeches were not made available to me later, I could not include in this any selections from them. Naturally, lectures given on topics of specialist interest do not find a place here.

I am thankful to Shri S. Balwant for readily accepting this for publication.

K.S. Murty

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\* I did visit, by invitation, a number of universities outside India also, especially in 1986-89: e.g. in G.D.R., Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, U.S.S.R., U.K., France, Spain and China. But there I only observed and was not asked to talk, which was good for me and them too!

*Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya  
Varanasi*

6. IX 1980

The principal objective of Universities like this is to study, understand, appropriate, preserve, disseminate and transmit Indian tradition. So, I would like to discuss in brief how authenticity and development are possible through tradition only.

**Tradition & Truth; Authenticity & Expansion of Consciousness**

A constant reflective review of tradition is very much necessary for the attainment of the real and the true. In fact while tradition should be revered by everybody, nobody should become its slave. However great a tradition may be, it is circumscribed by time; so by itself it is incapable of providing confidence, self-reliance and a sense of participation. Tradition is not just a corpus of scriptures, mechanical performance of ritual, or an eternal and immutable authority. Truth, indeed, is not a readily available commodity anywhere; it is an enexhaustible flow from a beginningless source. It manifests only in the independent thinking of each individual and only through it one comes to possess oneself. The source that is reality and truth manifests itself in different forms in historical events. Truth is attainable only through well-trodden paths by which it has been attained, but it is not possible to tread them all simultaneously or in the same manner. It becomes unveiled for a human being who loves it and to whom the law is the real, in the way taught by tradition, and then only it becomes his own. It is won in plumbing the depths of the past, by self-dedication to oneself, through an inner process. Authority is acceptance of the five thousand years old past with faith and veneration, because there is no other basis for the pilgrimage to truth. The past provides an authoritative spiritual context and at the same

time allows an opportunity for individual freedom. Moreover, for this purpose an external knowledge or a mere conception of tradition is not adequate; its assimilation and inward appropriation are necessary. One should never be dominated by the mythicised symbols of the past, nor should one irresponsibly flee away from it. The tradition of the past is rooted in one's family, country and people; everyone should through participation in it, broaden, evolve and extend it to the entire human world. Then man becomes authentic. Authenticity means awareness of truth, abiding in one's own state, or manifestation of one's true nature. While everything is limited, "the expansion of the consciousness of the good is unlimited and victorious" (Rajasekhara).

## Tradition & Development

According to both Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru the most important and difficult problem for independent India is the all-round development of its people and the provision of equal opportunities and rights to all of them; and for them it meant intellectual, economic, political and moral development. (Gandhi's letter to Nehru, Nov. 13, 1945) Although integral development touches every aspect of human life and action, unfortunately till now our development planning has been solely conditioned by the economic and statistical approach. Development is not merely having more but becoming more along with welfare and prosperity, truth and virtue ought to be integral parts of development. The reason for the underdevelopment of any country is its economic, political, cultural, intellectual and technological dependence. Especially economic slavery and deculturation are the characteristics and causes of underdevelopment. An autonomous development process beginning with technological progress based on available human resources leads to liberation from economic slavery, while cultural regeneration removes deculturation, cultural regeneration is possible only through an assimilation of the national tradition. There can be no development without cultural regeneration preceding it and consolidating it. Economic change is not possible without a solution of the cultural problem. Any nation can articulate its originality, achieve autonomous development and make a contribution to the world only by building with its aspiration based on

the foundations of its own culture. A people become developed through gaining cultural identity by being in conformity with their own tradition. The Weltanschauung adopted in the previous colonial period and the ideologies, values and standards imposed by the contemporary expanding superpowers have to be rejected in every way. It is important that people should develop their individuality and potentialities through self-reliance only. Rooted in our own tradition we should always keep our horizons open; only by being steeped in our own culture we can achieve boundless communication with other cultures. The aim of development is fulness of life, delight of mind and plenitude of peace.\*

Thus a critical knowledge of tradition is useful for authenticity and development, and of these for the first spiritual tradition and for the second cultural tradition are helpful.

## Spiritual & Scientific Truths

What has been said so far should not be mistaken as an advocacy of the superiority or exclusivity of any spiritual path and cultural chauvinism. The source and the goal of all men, even though the paths to the latter are multiple, some straight and some devious, are the same. No great spiritual tradition contains final, complete and unique truth, and not one of them is superior to the others, nor any one of them has been, is or will be the universal tradition. "Whatever those intensely devoted to sacred objects and rituals propound as the truth by several figurative ways of understanding—that is indeed truth" (Rajasekhara). Yet, it is harmful to follow a teaching such as "Buddhism has to be heard and Jainism has to be practised; conduct must be in accordance with the Veda, but the supreme Siva has to be meditated upon", because this would lead to a schism in the soul or indifferent cynicism devoid of strong faith. Life in communion with one's own tradition is the best and safest way both from the secular and sacred points of view. Has it not been said, "one's own Dharma though defective is better than another's"? Madhusudana Sarasvati,

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\* I discussed "Development" in my address to the Indian Philosophical Congress session in Madras on December 27, 1979.

worshipped by the followers of Advaita, knew no reality higher than Vasudeva-Krishna; and Hegel, the greatest among Western idealists, thought that the supreme being became a man, Jesus Christ the saviour of all. They are both right, but what they perceived as the highest and absolute truth is so only for them and for those who inherit and appropriate it, or for those who though not born to it realise it due to some circumstances; and not for others because it is not an univeral truth. This is because of the difference between spiritual and scientific truth, the first is absolute and the second universal.

### No Country or Culture superior to all others

All this applies *mutatis mutandis* to a national culture also. If it be admitted that the cosmos is God's work and all men his children, then the universe constitutes a single family and humanity a fraternity. Although it has been said, "My mother is goddess Parvati and my father God Siva; all men are my brothers and the three worlds are my country", it has also been rightly remarked that continued residence produces in the mind of the living beings through (the logical processes of) connection and exclusion, (the conceptions): "This is my own country; this is a foreign country" (Kalhana, Stein's Trans). So, no country is holy or superior to others and no race is the chosen one. The universal man is not the real living man; the latter is always the creature of a culture. He is a being involved in it, though his being is not identical with it. The developed human being is the manifestation of a culture in an individual and that culture is the contributioin of individuals, a result of corporate human effort over generations.\* While no one of the major cultures is perfect and no one of them is superior to the others, only when one is moored in one's own culture and loves one's own country—communicating with other cultures and recognising other countries as worthy of equal respect—one can develop integrally.

\* In Tamil also there is a similar idea: "Kaniyan Punkunran" (Every town is a home town, every man is a kinsman). This shows it was a widespread idea. Cp. Stoic cosmopolitanism.

+ See my *Metaphysics, Man and Freedom* (Reprint 1974)

## Reason, the criterion and critique of Authority & Tradition

When it was said earlier that assimilation, inward appropriation and critical knowledge of tradition are necessary, it has been implied that only those elements in it which are true, good and useful are to be accepted, preserved and followed. It has been said, "Those who know the essential as the essential, and the non-essential as non-essential, attain the essential" (*Dhammapada*). What should be the criterion for this? To this Indian tradition gave the answer long ago. One of the greatest scriptures of mankind declared: "take thou refuge in pure reason." Vacaspati Misra laid down the dictum: "for the apprehension of anything Samvid (immediate awareness) is the only refuge"; and this has been accepted by later Naiyayikas and Vaisesikas like Vallabha, Sankara Misra, Jayarama, Vacaspati the second, and Mahesvarananda. Rejecting scriptural authority in empirical matters, it appeals to immediate perception over and above everything else for ascertainment of the real nature of anything. As Jayanta Bhatta said, "perceptibility and imperceptibility are not established by a scriptural sentence; perceptibility is to become the object of a sense cognition". The great teachers of Vedanta also endorsed this position. Shri Madhvacarya has said that scripture is not authoritative when it conflicts with experience (V.T.V.). Shri Sankaracarya's position also is the same: "indeed there is no impossibility of irrationality in the seen (*Brh. Bha.* 4.3.6.); the contradictory of the seen has not been apprehended and vouched for by anyone (*Brh. Bha.* 1.4.10.); the unseen is to be established from the seen (*Brh. Bha.* 2. 2. 2.)". He has also clarified: "even a hundred scriptural texts can not be authoritative when they say that fire is cold or without light (*Gi. Bha* 18.66); even if a hundred scriptural sentences say so, things will not abandon their nature in different places and times (*Kena. Va. Bha.*)" Govindananda went to the extent of asserting that "scriptural truth can not be established when it is unsupported by inference or opposed to it (*Ra. Pra.* 1.1.2.)." Moreover, Shri Sankaracarya remarked about the Samkhya that "a metaphysical system can not be accepted just because it is desirable, and that there must be adequate reasons for commending it (*Su. Bha.* 2.3.50)" This is applicable to all philosophical systems. He has even said at another place that it is possible to know truth through tarka (*Mam. Ka. Bha* 3.1).

But his most momentous pronouncement on this point is: "reason alone is our authority for understanding the true nature of the real and unreal (*Katha. Bha 6.12.*)". These are the principles our philosophers accepted, though they did not completely adhere to them. Remembering that only the blameless deeds and good practices of our elders and teachers are to be followed, let us not only accept these principles but completely adhere to them. Then reason becomes the criterion and critique of authority and tradition; and then only there can be no conflict of religion with commonsense, science or history. When we live in tune with tradition guided by reason and selfconscious faith, our lives will become free and enlightened.

## Indian Culture & Unity

As reference has been made to culture and the necessity for cultural regeneration, a few observations on our culture may be appropriate. Some decades ago Gurudev Tagore spoke of the main river of Indian culture arising in the heights of Indian consciousness and flowing in four streams (the Vedic, Puranic, Buddhist and Jaina), to which the Islamic from outside became a tributary as the Tibetan Brahmaputra to the Ganges. Later came the flood of Western culture for which, said Tagore, we must make a separate course so that we might be saved from an irruption.\* In his poem "Bharata-Tirtha" he sang about the great human ocean that is India into which streams of men came in impetuous torrents and merged.

Tagore's poetic intuition has been confirmed by anthropology and sociology. Indian civilization was formed by a number of processes which related diverse elements; it was especially consolidated through an interaction of popular lore and reflective thought (Robert Redfield). Bernard S. Cohn, Elizabeth Bacon and A.L. Kroeber consider India to be a separate and definable culture area, with a distinct and definable civilization with local and regional manifestations. The people of India may be racially classified as Indo-Dravidian and not as members of any European or Asiatic

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\* The Centre of Indian Culture.

race (W.C. Boyd). B.S. Guha also thinks that Indian population constitutes essentially a basic type (Palae-Mediterranean or Mediterranean) with regional variations. Similarly, the Indian languages though belonging to the families of Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Sino-Tibetan speech families influenced each other, fused and developed common traits, giving rise to a pan-Indian type in language (S.K. Chatterji). So, India is, as M.B. Eme-neau said, a linguistic area. Similarly, it can be asserted, that there is a common Indian religious approach. Even Indian Christianity and Indian Islam are not identical with European Christianity and Arabic Islam. It is our duty to be aware of this Indian synthesis, this unity in multiplicity, make it firm and coherent, and develop our social and political institutions accordingly. Our ultimate goal must be to "prepare the grand field for the co-ordination of the cultures of the world" (Tagore).

## Indian Culture & Modernity

Some are of the opinion that Indian tradition being incompatible with modernity is opposed to it, and that therefore only when traditional beliefs, values and institutions are abolished, modernisation can take place. Others think that Indian culture is not opposed to science, progress and prosperity; I have elsewhere supported this view.\* As in the past, now also by a process of borrowing and innovation which can develop and incorporate useful and novel indigenous and foreign elements into a complex and continuous civilization, Indian tradition and modernity can co-exist and mutually adapt themselves to each other. The empirical investigations of anthropologists concluded that this was already happening through adaptive strategies. Let us be participants in this process.

## II

### *Kakatiya University*

26 VII 1986

#### Indian Unity

Why was it that, not to speak of India, even South India could not achieve political unity and security against foreign invasion? "The theory and principle and the actual constitution of the Indian Polity" was, to quote Sri Aurobindo, that of "a complex of communal freedom and self-determination with a supreme coordinating authority", "a uniting rule that respected every existing regional and communal liberty", "holding together and synthetizing in a free and living organic system these autonomies". (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Pondicherry, 1975, pp. 343, 368, 369). The ideal of an all-Indian dharmarajya under a chakravartin, who would at once be a sage and a king, established by righteous and, as far as possible, peaceful means, was entertained by both ancient Hindu and Buddhist theorists, but it never became a reality. No king, without the vision of an universal Indian State in which a just society could be established, who undertook conquests motivated by aggressive ambition, drained away the resources of a conquered territory, carrying away booty, disturbed the established customs, laws and religions of the conquered, dethroned rulers and in their places crowned his own relatives or followers, or converted independent rulers into vassals under his control without any autonomy, could become the ideal Chakravartin. Through greedy or demonic victories (lobha-vijaya or asura-vijaya) a dharmarajya cannot be established; and so an all Indian State

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\* "Wars undertaken to acquire other's land and treasures to satisfy one's selfish interests are greedy wars, while wars undertaken to kill enemy kings and capture all that belongs to them and ravage their countries are demonic wars". (my *Indian Foreign Policy*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 130).

encompassing a just society remained a dream and a myth. While imperial rule over large parts of India by different dynasties was established a number of times by adoption of the usual means because of usual motivation, as it had no high ideal, no anchorage in people's consent and aspirations and no stable administrative and military organisation, it could not endure. Elsewhere I have discussed all this in some detail. (see my *Indian Foreign Policy*, pp. 1-14, 129-142).

This issue has present relevance. After India became free, a universal Indian State has been realised, and fortunately its constitution is more or less in tune with the ancient Indian ideal of a dharmarajya. Nevertheless, the attitude of some of our states to each other is reminiscent of that of the Yadavas, Kakatiyas and Hoysalas to each other. If, on the one hand, the Union "armed with efficient powers, position and prestige, but limited to its proper rights and functions, at once controlling and controlled by the rest" (Sri Aurobindo, op. cit., p. 343), and, on the other hand, the states endowed with the awareness that they are the limbs of a live vibrant whole, without which they are nothing become cooperative partners in the building of a just and egalitarian society, peace and prosperity will prevail throughout this country.

### Indian Cultural Collage

"Indianness" is the highest value for which we must all develop a passion. We may be Mizos or Andhras, Punjabis or Malayalis, but we have all only one country and that, as the *Vishnu Purana* said, is, Bharata which extends northwards from the southern sea to the Himalayas and everyone born in it is a Bharatiya: "Uttaram yatsamudrasya himadreschaiva gacchatam, varsham tadbharatam nama bharati yatra santitih" (*Vishnu Purana*, II.3.1). It is, the Puranas declare, the land best suited for enjoyment as well as for spiritual endeavour; and for welfare and progress, if one is so oriented and works for them. (e.g. *Ibid.*, and *Markandeya, Brahma, Brahmanda & Bhagavata Puranas*.) Let us be constantly conscious of our Indian identity and our common culture which is a beautiful and dazzling mosaic in the gradual and natural evolution of which the Aryan, Dravidian, Australoid and Mongoloid races, Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina, Muslim, Sikh and Christian religions and civilizations of the West and different Asian countries participated.

## Purging of Tradition

One of the greatest revolutionaries and statesmen, Lenin, has said that "guarding a heritage does not at all mean being bound by it". Let us to the best of our ability guard our heritage by rejecting falsification and denigration of it, purify it by discarding whatever is retrograde and against people's welfare, and proceed along the path of social progress.

The Varna vyavastha (caste system) is considered by many to be integral to Hinduism. But along with some authorities I do not think it forms a part of Hinduism. In fact it never prevailed at any time in the form it is found set forth in some portions of the puranas and smritis. Even if it was in existence and did some good at some time, today reason and the moral sense of civilized humanity finds it to be as much of an evil as apartheid. The Fifth Veda declared there is no life style or pattern of conduct which can be considered to be beneficial for all for ever. *Na hi sarvahitah kashchidacharah sampravartate (Mahabharata, "Santiparva", 259, 17-18).* Even if something has been prescribed as dharma, the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* (VI. 156) enjoins, if it is abhorred by the world it should not be practised. *Lokavidvishtam dharma yama pyacharennatu ("Dharma yam=vihitam, Lokavidvishtam=lokabhisastijanakam", Vijnanesvara).*

That the caste system is opposed to both Bhakti and Vedanta was perceived by some of the great minds who more or less belonged to the Kakatiya times. Mallikarjuna Pandita, a contemporary of the Kakatiya King Rudradeva (1158-1195), lamented that he could neither abandon his love of Bhakti nor his adherence to Brahman. *Bkakti mida valapu brahmambu to pottu.* By the latter he meant the caste system and ritualism. He perceived the contradiction between, on the one side, Bhakti and, on the other side, caste and ritualism, but his heredity and milieu did not allow him to overcome it. Vidyaranya, who hailed from Warangal and was responsible for helping Harihara II to consolidate the Vijayanagara empire, if not for inspiring its foundation, stated: "Varnasrama etc. are illusorily imagined to belong to the body" (*Panchadasi, "Dhyanadipa", 101*). *Varnasramadayo dehe mayaya parikalpitah.* "One who has the delusion that one is a Brahmin is a guilty one who suffers". "The vision of the Absolute is impossible for one whose perception of caste etc. are not sublated". (*Anubhutiprakasa*,

XV. 31-3,36). The orthodox reactionary exponents may argue that this should be confined to the realm of ideas only and not to that of practice, which implies that followers of Vedanta should be split personalities, with their convictions opposed to their actions. The positive and progressive elements of Bhaktivada and Vedanta which are conducive to the amelioration and emancipation of the disadvantaged among us should be widely disseminated, rejecting whatever encourages perpetuation of injustice and inequity.

### III

## *Sri Venkateswara University*

5 IX 1986

### **Teachers' Day**

I am glad this meeting has been organised on the 25th anniversary of the Teachers' Day. 25 years ago Government of India declared S. Radhakrishnan's birthday as Teachers' Day. Today (Sept. 5, 1986) we are here to celebrate its Silver Jubilee. On this occasion it may not be inappropriate to express extempore some thoughts on the current educational situation. Some manana on vidya would be a sort of homage to that eminent philosopher teacher and statesman.

It is interesting that elsewhere in this country this Day is being celebrated in other ways. In the national capital some teachers, it is reported, are sitting in *dharna* demanding that college teachers' scales be improved and put on a par with those of Central Government employees. Some Opposition leaders have issued a statement urging Government to announce today that the recommendations of the National Commission II (relating to school teachers) should be forthwith implemented. I hope a favourable decision relating to all teachers will be announced soon.

### **Plethora of Reports**

Not to speak of the considerable number of reports of committees and commissions on education published in the colonial period, since Independence we have had the reports of the University Education Commission (1948-1949), the Secondary Education Commission (1952-1953), and the Education Commission (1964-1966).<sup>\*</sup> In addition, the reports of the Committee on

\* S. Radhakrishnan, A.L. Mudaliar, and D.S. Kothari have been respectively the Chairmen of these commissions.

Religious and Moral Instruction (1960), the Committee on National Service,\* etc. have been published. There have been various other committees like those on Technical Education, Vocational Education, Sanskrit Education, all of which have produced reports. Finally, came the 'National Policy on Education-1968'.

More interesting and in some respects more important than all these is the Report of Dr. Zakir Husain Committee, 1937, appointed by All India National Education Conference, Wardha, 1937, of which Mahatma Gandhi was President.

In 1983-85 two Teachers' Commissions (one concerned with teachers in schools and another with those in colleges and universities) brought out their reports. Just recently, a committee appointed by the U.G.C. on issues relating to qualifications, recruitment, promotion, emoluments and service conditions of university teachers submitted its report. A more important event is the formulation, ratification by parliament and, then, publication in May 1986 of a new "National Policy on Education-1986". It was preceded by the preparation and publication by the government of a document "Challenge of Education—A Policy Perspective, 1985," and numerous discussions and seminars on it throughout the country, officially sponsored and financed. In November 1986 came another government document "National Policy on Education-1986, Programme of Action", based on reports of 23 'task forces', which too was presented to parliament and approved, again after discussions in many meetings of 'experts' and officials of central and state governments, representatives of UGC, universities, teachers' organisations etc. "The Policy" and "Programme" of 1986 have been themes for countless lectures, discussions, debates, symposia and seminars throughout the country for over a year, all financed by public funds.

### Critiques of Reports

Soon after the report of the Education Commission of the 60s

+ Sri Prakasa and C.D. Deshmukh have been respectively the Chairmen of these committees.

\* Chaired by Mehrotra.

was published, Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar of Andhra University, studied it assiduously and in an impressive and scholarly lecture, presented a scathing analysis of it and concluded that there was nothing profoundly original or excitingly revolutionay in it.

Soon after the publication of the document *Challenge of Education*, 1985, which praised the "National Policy on Education, 1968" for its "imaginative and purposeful thrust" and for its having emphasized the necessity for "creating an ethos that would produce young men and women of character and ability committed to national service and development", I pointed out the lack of anything really original in *Challenge, 1985*, and "wondered":

"Whether a new policy with a more worthwhile overall objectives will be formulated, adequate resources made available and necessary concerted action to implement it taken—."

"New Education Policy, Some Reflections & Reactions",  
Address at Guntur, 8-12-1985.

In my December 1985 Address I asserted, borrowing from what I called Swami Vivekananda's "pedagogy of the oppressed", that our nation lived in huts, its fate depended on the fate of the masses, that Indian illiteracy and poverty were due to our "great national sin", viz. the neglect of the masses, and that what we needed was an education that could rouse them, and make them resist and fight evil, tyranny and injustice. While I commended its intention and approach, the following ideas in *Challenge 1985* were criticised by me in that Address:

- (1) The possibility of introducing a type of education which would construct a just and free technological society, with Indian society as at present structured, and with government machinery and educational institutions being what they were; (2) the impossibility of universalizing elementary education by 1990 and of illiteracy being wiped out, without extremely drastic and radical action; (3) eliminating unemployment and reducing overcrowding in higher education through vocational education; (4) the proposal to start a model school in each district with Central finances to provide free instruction from VI to XII standards, along with

board, lodging, books etc. to students admitted on the basis of entrance tests; (5) to think of delinking degrees and jobs as a magic solution to educated unemployment and over-crowding in institutions of higher education; (6) to consider 'the obvious paucity of resources' as 'the most important reason' for the present state of affairs; (7) attempt to impose uniformity under the guise of a national system.

I concluded that Address thus: "Let there be consensus on fundamentals, on goals and means, and let every state and institution have the freedom of teaching and inquiry as well as absence of administrative coercion in the learning situation. Within the nationally accepted framework of ideals and methods, the states as well as individual universities, colleges and schools should have scope for creativity and innovation".

## On Committees

From the Vedic sages to Tagore and Gandhi, from Socrates and Plato to Dewey and Russell and from Confucius to Mao, down the ages some of the greatest minds in different civilisations have been pondering over the objectives, nature and methods of education and the qualities of the right types of teachers and students and their mutual relations. It is extremely difficult for most people to hit upon and express educational ideas and ideals which did not occur to anyone of those great men. So, it is not surprising if persons commissioned by governments to produce reports are unable to put into them anything really original and inspiring. But in a democracy everytime a new government comes into office perhaps it has to formulate a policy which it should claim to be "new", choose some men to constitute a commission or committee and ask them to produce a report. The Commission or committee spends some months or years in having many meetings and tours over most of the country, in collecting much information and analysing and produces a report. Of course, nothing in it would

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\* I am entirely in favour of "a common school system of public education" as conceived and recommended by the Education Commission 1964-66.

come as a revelation to the knowledgeable. Still, at least another committee of MPs, secretaries or ministers 'studies' that report for a long time and makes its comments and observations on it available to the cabinet, which after considerable time formulates a policy on its basis. This is later deliberated upon by parliament and, with alterations sometimes, it is approved and becomes then "a new national policy" ready for implementation. Here I cannot resist quoting Professor Freeman J. Dyson (Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton): "We have been suffering from a surfeit of committees. Committees do harm merely by existing". (In his Gifford Lectures, Aberdeen, 1985: *Vide Time*, 21 March 88, p. 49.)

### An 1986 Comment on 1968

It has become virtually a tradition in this country for election promises not to be fulfilled and policies not to be implemented sincerely, seriously and fully, at least in the case of education. This is proved by the comment of the "National Policy on Education-1986" on the "National Policy on Education-1968", after praising the latter: The 1968 Policy did not "get translated into a detailed strategy of implementation, accompanied by the assignment of specific responsibilities and financial and organisational support". (1.8) In plain and simple language does it not mean that the policy of 1968 was not implemented? In due course, will the Policy of 1986 escape a similar or more severe comment?

### Imitation of the Alien or Atavism

While there is much talk of self-reliance, in Indian education actually there is either too much of imitation of current alien models or atavistic nostalgia.

In the designing of the structure of our institutions, in running them, in methods of teaching and examining, in selecting topics of research, there is too much of imitation of the West. The first Indian universities followed the London model. Then came the craze to have the Oxbridge pattern. More recently, Central Universities, especially, have been established and organised on the Sussex model. The IITs follow the Western path. In research too

whatever seems to be making the waves in the West becomes the fashion here. In all this, questions like What are our needs? What are our resources? What are our capacities? are not raised. Consequently from 1857 till today there is not only an implantation of alien models, but also an import for teaching and research of subjects and problems in vogue abroad, and, of course, also borrowing of methods of teaching and examining.

In contrast to alien-imitation, an alternative put forward is a flaunting of the gurukula system. From the accounts we have, how did the gurukulas function? The guru treated his disciples as his own children, he, his family and they lived together sharing together whatever the guru had and could get. The disciples venerated the guru as an unquestioned authority : He was infallible and he was to be implicitly obeyed. It is believed on the basis of stories and tales that gurukulas existed in forests, and life in them was simple, chaste, pure and in tune with nature. What the gurukulas did was not advancement of knowledge from generation to generation, but just preservation and transmission of what was known. It was non-destroying of whatever was, with nothing added. Moreover, the gurukulas very rarely educated the vaisyas and certainly never the sudras or lower castes. They neglected useful arts, crafts and technology. The deification of the guru led to an atrophy of reason and the critical faculty, as well as a lack of an incentive to question, investigate and discover. Gurudom still prevails in our classrooms and laboratories.

The paucity of relevant and original research is in the main due to imitative and repetitive learning and research and gurudom.

## Teacher & Society

The myth that the teacher was always given the highest respect in Indian civilization deserves to be exploded. Nobody who has critically read Indian history and literature can find evidence for this, viz., that the teacher was highly respected at any period of Indian history. It was always the powerful and wealthy that commanded the highest respect in Indian society, not the scholar or scientist and not the poet or artist. In addition, spiritual persons believed to be in possession of magical power (sapanugrahas-amarthyam) were feared and venerated, just as today also "godmen" whose blessings can fulfil desires are.

Today the struggle to make the teacher, scholar, scientist, poet and artist, to get a respectable position in Indian society has to be carried on unrelentingly. Their status, prestige and income are not at all anywhere near those of the civil servants, bank officials, or public sector employees, while the latter do not at all enjoy the influence and affluence which politicians in power and the magnates in industry, business and commerce do.

One should not also claim for the teacher, learned man, scientist or artist any kind of superiority over others. From the point of view of religion, science or logic there is no justification for anyone to be considered superior to others. One of the profound truths the *Mahabharata* teaches is that a learned brahmana ascetic, a virtuous butcher, an honest grocer and a dutiful housewife are equal. So, rhetoric about the importance of the teacher and the great respect due to him from everyone else, either on a Teachers' Day or on any other day is unjustified. Ignorance can be dispelled only by teaching, hunger only by food and disease only by treatment. The teacher, the farmer and the physician are equally important, and so are all others. A hired labourer and a vice chancellor: neither is inferior to the other; and a minister or millionaire is not entitled to greater respect than them. When will Indian education succeed in making Indian society realise this? [updated & edited 1988]

## IV

### *Andhra University*

15 XI 1986

#### **Social Transformation, a prior necessary condition**

If we want our universities to produce excellent creative work of the highest order, it is necessary to transform our society. For that, as the Chinese philosophers whom Han Suyin met as far back as in 1966 said, "a change of thinking in the people" is necessary because it only "could propel advance: A transformation of ideas and habits and behaviour before a change in the material conditions of living could occur". (*My House has two Doors*, London, 1980, p. 419). Prime Minister Ryzkhov of USSR recently asserted "intellectual stagnation inevitably breeds stagnation in deeds", while Secretary General Gorbachev declared that "improvement of social relations, a change of mentality, the forging of a new psychology" are needed and "inertia in thinking" must end to make people devote themselves totally to their occupations. (*vide* their reports to the 27th Congress of the CPSU.) This is confirmed by Everett Hagen's theory that "a change in social structure leading to change in personality" is "the prime mover in social change". (*On the Theory of Social Change*, 1962, p. 237. For almost the same view, David Meclelland, *The Achieving Society*, 1961.) This means social, cultural and psychological correlates must have precedence.

The strategy for motivating people to change their social and work psychology, Gorbachev thought, is to remove their grievances and improve their living and working conditions. (op. cit.) Towards this end he emphasized family integrity, ethics and values. Psychological satisfaction and moral incentives thus gain importance. Interestingly, we find that in US also in this month's US congressional and state elections "the politics of values" is playing an important part, because many Democrats and Republicans are searching for "ways to inject values in public debate". Thus in our country and elsewhere the question is: How to encourage

people to live by certain norms? What can government do in this regard, and is it possible for schools and colleges to inculcate students with values that all citizens share?

It is to be noted that in the industrially developed countries, e.g. USA, USSR and Britain, leaders are talking of the importance of "strengthening the family", "regenerating the family" and "a strong family structure" respectively. "Return to traditional values" or "return to the values of an older era before the dawn of the permissive age" are the phrases frequently heard in USA and Britain. "The new education system would seek to reinforce the country's old values", declared our Prime Minister. (*vide* his speech at Delhi on June 26, 1986 reported in the "Times of India", June 27, 1986.)

## Norms of Indian Culture

We may hearken to some great Indologists who have scientifically studied Indian Culture and identified what they thought were its values.

In 1942 Franklin Edgerton considered the proper and balanced cultivation of "social propriety, worldly advantage and love" to be the ordinary threefold norm of Indian culture, while knowledge of the ultimate truth is its extraordinary norm. According to him, "a very important feature of Hindu practical morality" is the doctrine of ahimsa (no injury) to any living being, a logical deduction (he argued) from the Upanishadic doctrine that the real self of everyone is identical with that of the universe. (his article in "Journal of the Americal Oriental Society", Vol. 62, 1942)

In 1961 W. Norman Brown suggested that Duty, the unusual stress put on correct action, or correct or right behaviour, might be the vitalizing or determining element in Indian civilization which from the third millennium B.C. to the present has had a continuity. Other large or basic values of Indian civilization which, wrote Brown, might have given it vitality throughout history could have been Truth, Ahimsa, and the Attitude towards law as not made by man or by the King. (his article in the "Journal of Asian Studies", Vol. XX, No. 4, 1961.)

On the other hand, Walter Ruben "counterposed" "the always traceable progressivity as the most important cultural heritage of India as against the at least five thousand years old continuity of the tradition". (*Sanskrit Studies in GDR*, Pt. I, Berlin; 1978; p. 69).

Many of us may accept one, some or all of the values identified by the first two American scholars or the Third East German scholar as our old or traditional values. It is possible that depending upon ancient Sanskrit and Tamil epics some of us may like to add to them filial piety, chastity, and fraternal-sororal affection. Gandhiji at least considered chastity to be not less important than truth and ahimsa. Or, one might argue (as I once did in a lecture at Delhi under ICPR auspices) that self-control or sense-control—atmanigraha or indriyajaya—is the supreme Indian value, because not only the Vedantic, Buddhist and Jaina scriptures, but also our treatises on virtue, polity and eros as well as our classical medical scientists accept it as much. According to a prominent journalist, who is also a trained sociologist, who animadverted on Vedanta, "restraint" is one of the three basic principles of Gandhiji's alternative civilization.

### Any exclusive Indian Values, really?

Two questions may now be raised: (1) Are any of the above exclusively Indian values? Anyone acquainted with Christian, Chinese or Japanese cultures cannot answer 'Yes'. The Gita, the Dhammapada and the two great smritis do not contain any basis of ethical values or moral laws not accepted by the authors of the artha and kama sastras, or the Lokayatika brahmanas.

Manu ordained:

"Ahimsa satyamasteyam saucamindriyanigraham,  
Etam samasikam dharmam—" (X.63)

Yajnavalkya enjoined:

"Ahimsa satyamasteyam saucamindriyanigraha,  
Danam damo dayakshantih sarvesham  
dharmasadhanam". (v. 122)

\* See my *Far Eastern Philosophies*, Mysore, 1976.

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As both these law-givers themselves advised, if their codes or any tradition lays down as moral law or duty what is not conducive to happiness and what is opposed to the moral consensus of mankind, it should simply be rejected. (Manu, IV. 176; Yajnavalkya, VI. 156). *Lokavidvishtam dharmyamapya charennatu*. Similarly, as St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out, Christ himself did not give any new moral laws except those derived from human virtue. (*Summa Theologica*, I. II. Q. 108, 1.2.) I have not the time to elaborate, but it is a fact that values such as these are not exclusively relevant to any particular society—pastoral, feudal, industrial or technological.

Let us, therefore, speak of universal ethical values instead of Western, Indian, Christian, Islamic or Hindu values. True values are neither ethnic, nor do they belong to a particular religion or age only; and it is these we ought to promote and propagate in our educational institutions. We may also remember Plato's teaching that because virtue is innate it can be fostered by education, and practised and taught by everyone according to his ability. (*Meno*; *Protagoras*.)

(2) It is nonsense to say, as some do, that modernization and technology would destroy all traditional values, for the real universal ones among the latter are in no way opposed to the former and as for the others the sooner they are destroyed the better. Modernization is nothing but availing of increased opportunities of systematic inquiry and subjecting our life more and more to rational examination. Did not Socrates say an unexamined life is worthless? To make reason "legislative of experience" (Kant) and to search vigorously for "irreducible and stubborn facts" (Whitehead)—this is the characteristic of science. Acquisition of a method whereby nature is mastered, dominated and moulded so that it subserves our ends is technology. It is for us to ensure that our ends are in tune with our ethical and aesthetic intuitions. Spirit should triumph over all that is non-spiritual, the body, senses, attachment, and aversion, mind, and the world of things. This is the ideal of Tantra, as well as of Hatha and Raja Yogas.

# V

## *Marathwada University*

24 XII 1986

### **Indian Unity**

The Satavahanas were the earliest among the royal dynasties who transmitted the Aryan culture to the South and the Dravidian to the North, transforming both and giving further shape to a unified Indian culture. The genius of Tuglaq realised the strategic and cultural importance of the Deccan and attempted to establish the political capital of India in it. Seeking to achieve the administrative and politico-military unification of India Aurangazeb sacrificed his life while fighting for it, while living in a tent pitched here. They were all men of great vision who realised that the indivisible unity of India comprehends within itself the land to the South of the Vindhya as well as the land to the north of them, with their sub-cultures having as their components varying life-patterns and languages. This is a truth which we should not forget: our homeland is neither Andhra nor Tamilnadu, neither Uttar Pradesh nor West Bengal, but India about which the Puranas sang:

"Uttaram yatsamudrasya himadrescaiva gacchatam, varsham  
tadbharatam nama bharati yatra santatih".  
(*Vishnupurana*, II. 3.1)

### **This Means**

That land-mass which is to the north of the sea stretching upto the Himalayas has Bharata as its name and all its offspring are Bharati. That all those who are born in India, irrespective of their religion, language, caste and creed, are Indian—is the puranic (ancient) truth which we have to keep uppermost in our consciousness.

## Beauty & Bliss, pursued by Bhikshus & Bhaktas

Why did the bhikshus and bhaktas produce unsurpassed beauty in caves and out of rocks? Our ancient books teach:

"Anandadhyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante, anandena jatani jivante, anandam prayantyabhisamvisanti".

(*Taittiriya Upanishad*, III. 6)

"Etasyaivanandasasya anyani bhutani matram upajivanti".

(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, IV. 3. 32)

### This means

All beings are born of bliss, live by it and merge in it. They are sustained by a fraction of it. Rightly did Sankaracharya observe that all worldly happiness is only a fragment of the Supreme Bliss.

"Laukiko'pyanando brahmanandasasya matra". (*Taittiriya-bhashya*, II.8). As the world arises out of Bliss, is sustained by it and has it as its end, happiness in this world is to be sought and experienced. We are here to delight in the beauties of nature, make our lives happy and thereby fruitful and to enhance our happiness by creating beauty. Art is for the cultivation of the self, says the *Aitareya Brahmana*. Atmasamskritivava Silpani. To live in accordance with the law that governs the universe, to follow the rita, is to make life beautiful, artistic and happy. The best of the bhikshus and bhaktas endeavoured to lead such a life, and some of them created beauty imitating natural beauty. This was to express the delight they experienced living holy lives and contemplating the beauty in the animate and inanimate world, and to make others aware of the beauty all around and arouse delight in them.

An ethical life is as important as a life which experiences beauty. Siva is good, auspicious and beautiful. Similarly, the Buddha is the abode of all that is mangala as well as beautiful. As it was said of Krishna, everything of him—his form, life, work, teaching—is sweet, delightful. "Madhuradhipateh akhilam madhuram". Who are Siva, Buddha and Krishna? They are all forms in which the Absolute has revealed itself to the deserving. The Absolute, which is the good as well as the beautiful, is to be realised

through contemplation and creation of goodness and beauty and by making life virtuous and cultured. This is what Ajanta and Ellora teach us.

## Achievement of Maratha Saints: Attempt to realise Spiritual Democracy

Your university has adopted for its motto a saying of Jnanesvara, perhaps the greatest philosopher-saint of Maharashtra. In the history of Indian religious thought he is important for more than one reason. I will mention some. Firstly, he emphasised again the old Upanishadic notion that bliss pervades the universe which is established in it. This world is not a vale of sorrow and tears, but a beautiful valley of bliss. Secondly, he advocated a combination of knowledge, yoga and devotion as the best path of liberation. By saying that a man of knowledge may continue to do works or abandon them, he rejected the doctrine that a jnani must renounce all action. While devotion is a means to liberating knowledge, even after the latter is obtained the former should continue. To be devoted "is to look upon everything as God". Thirdly, he pointed out the Gita to be superior to the Veda, because the former proclaimed its doctrines to all classes, castes and both the sexes, thus bringing salvation to all, while the latter 'whispered' its doctrines into the ears of the upper castes only.

The implications of this thirteenth century saint's teaching were brought out fully in the abhangs of the bhaktas of Vithoba, who flourished from about 1300 to 1800 A.D., making Maharashtra during that period an abode of spiritual democracy, and that "spiritually emancipated the national mind". (M.G. Ranade) Coming from the lower classes and castes—tailors, carpenters, potters, shopkeepers, barbers and even socalled 'outcastes' like mahars—the reformation led by these bhaktas was not only religious, social and literary, but was the work of the people, of the masses. Their ethical and heterodox protest against social distinctions revived, purified and democratized Hinduism.

May I have the presumption to draw your attention to the social teaching of Saint Tukaram (1608-1649), born in a sudra tradesman's family, who is the best representative of Vithoba's bhaktas? The essence of his teaching is: "Where pardon, peace and purity dwell,

there God abides". "Blessed are the pious, for their heart is pure". He taught that service of others was the most important characteristic of saint. "Whoso makes himself the friend of the oppressed, recognize him for a true saint; know that God dwells in Him". "He who serves other creatures and shows them compassion, in him the supreme spirit dwells". "The saints wear out their bodies in serving others; forbearing love is their stock-in-trade; their happiness is in the happiness of others". On caste distinctions and untouchability his comments were as follows. "I find the whole world people with relatives. I see nothing to cause contamination of man by man". Pointing out that the world is not divided into parts to hold different castes and that the standards of goodness are merits and demerits and not race or caste, Tukaram declared: "Twixt the low and lofty, God not difference sheweth". "Men of low degree that might not hear the Vedas have found a place in Vaikuntha". It is bhava that procures God's grace. Sir R.G. Bhandarkar explained Tukaram's bhava as "faith, love or the pure heart," while Sir N.G. Chandavarkar pointed out that charity, self-restraint and selfs-reverence (dana, damana and dharma) are the bases of bhava.

### Social Change: Ranade & Ambedkar

The Prarthana Samaj, which came into existence in 1867 inspired by Jnanesvara, Tukaram, Ramadas and others, became the centre of many social reform activities. C.F. Andrews observed that it was "the last and in many ways the more enduring aspect of the new reformation in India". M.G. Ranade, to whom its success was mostly due, emphasized two principles: (1) A reformer must deal with the whole man whose activities—religious, social and political—are interdependent. (2) A true reformer must not try to break with past and do what his individual reason suggests as proper and fitting.

In my earlier works I have described Ambedkar as the Manu of Modern India, a unique figure in the social history of India and a great and fascinating personality. His analysis of society as he found it and his thesis on the annihilation of caste are still relevant and important. His contention that as the outcaste was the byproduct of the caste system, the outcaste would be emanci-

pated only when the caste system was destroyed, cannot be brushed aside. It would be good for India if Ambedkar's faith that political and economic democracy could be achieved by legislation and enforcement of law, becomes the credo of all its citizens. His critique of any atavistic political ideology which opposes modernization and independent thinking and inculcates hero worship of a leader, is sound. "Bhakti", he commented, "may be a road to salvation of the soul; but in politics Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation". I will not enlarge upon another point, but just mention it. Accepting Tukaram's idea that destruction of evil-doers is a form of ahimsa, Ambedkar urged that Sakti (strength is to be combined with Sila (character) in a fight for justice. (Speech on July 19, 1942, Samata Sainik Dal Conference) Thus he foreshadowed Nelson Mandela who favoured armed struggle to resolve the conflict between conscience and immoral, unjust and intolerable laws.

*Nagarjuna University*

3 I 1987

**Right Objective for University Studies of Social Philosophies**

University departments or centres for studies of ideologies and systems should have aims different from schools run by religious organisations or political parties. Historical, analytical, critical and objective studies of them ought to be their concern. University study or research on Vedanta or Buddhism, Marxism or Gandhism must not degenerate into unquestioned total acceptance of their teachings, mere exposition of their sources according to loyal traditional interpretations, extolling of their founders and past great followers, developing apologetics for them and propagation of them. The business of a university centre or department in a secular democratic republic with an open society is the quest for truth, advancement and dissemination of knowledge, and not advocacy and propaganda on behalf of any particular cluster of beliefs and doctrines. Complete and final truth in its absoluteness and perfection has not so far been revealed to or discovered by anyone and expressed in a body of propositions in an inerrant manner. This is more so in the case of natural, political and social realities than in the realm of the metaphysical, ethical and aesthetic. No statement concerning the latter could be demonstrated or demolished, whereas in the case of the former continuously accumulating empirical knowledge may validate or invalidate past and current doctrines and theories. Whether it is the doctrine of, e.g., nairatmya (no-self), class struggle or satyagraha, it ought not to be the motive and mission of a university man to oppose or defend it, unless his objective study of it leads him to do so.

I like to believe that Reality is Wisdom and Compassion (Prajna and Karuna) and that as I am essentially akin to it, the more I cultivate them the more I will become authentically myself and attain

infinite happiness and peace. I am fascinated by the concept of society and history dialectically and inevitably developing towards the realization of a just and equal society on earth. I find no scientific evidence for either; nor anything that could once for all conclusively prove that Reality is not Wisdom and Compassion, or that History is not a dialectical as well as a teleological movement with a goal or end known with certainty. I have every right to hold fast to such a conviction accepting it as an absolute truth and act accordingly, and to persuade others also to do so. But it would be wrong on my part to present any such belief, idea or doctrine as certain knowledge demonstrated by empirical experience and science.

A scholar working in a university department or centre for, say, Buddhist or Marxist Studies should have complete freedom to study objectively either of them in historical, logical and critical manner, draw legitimate conclusions from his investigations and publish them. Universities in an open society within a secular democratic republic should not give scope to fundamentalism of any sort, whether Vedantic or Buddhist, Marxist or Gandhian. Extolling Lokayata and interpreting history in a materialistic way, straitjacketing malleable facts and ignoring others, is as scientific as extolling Advaita Vedanta and interpreting history idealistically. In a like manner an infallible guru, an inerrant scripture and a philosophy giving scientific knowledge are myths. In no historical person, book or system is omniscience crystallised. In spite of what some swamis and bhikshus claim, developments in science have not so far proved either Vedanta or Buddhism; nor have these been disproved. Dialectical Materialism, whatever some might say, is in the same situation.

In this connection I may allude to trends of thinking in China and Soviet Union. "History", according to *Outlook* (journal of the Chinese Communist Party), "has not been developing in the way Marx and Engels envisaged". Hu Yaobang has asserted that class struggle is not the keylink and that practical conditions have to be taken into account. A recent *Pravda* article has called for "deep changes in political thinking", suggesting that the doctrine of class struggle culminating in violence may not be valid anymore. These trends show that for the discerning no ideology is sacrosanct.

I thought it useful to say all this to indicate that Centres of Studies like this (e.g. for Buddhist or Socialist Studies) are not intended

to propagate any particular religion or ideology, but for promoting historical, analytical, comparative and critical studies of them and, if some scholars so choose, their constructive development.

While research of immediate practical value is important, the equal importance of basic research in mathematics and pure sciences must not be overlooked. Finally, it must be remembered that neglect of advanced work in classical and modern languages and literatures, history, fine arts and social sciences, would be so disastrous that any discovery or invention in the proposed laboratory for studies of natural disasters would be of no avail.

## VII

### *Dayalbagh Educational Institute*

12 III 1987

#### **Interdisciplinary Approach & Core Courses**

I find that at the undergraduate level, apart from two main subjects, this Institute offers a number of interdisciplinary electives, work-based training and, in addition, a number of core courses which inculcate elements of Indian Culture, Comparative Study of Religion and concomitantly Scientific Method and Rural Development. Similarly, in Engineering and Commerce and, even, in the postgraduate courses, their various components altogether make courses here quite different from those given in number of universities.

The National Policy on Education (1986) can be summarised, perhaps not inadequately, in two ways: it seeks first of all, to make the students develop faith in and adherence to values to which India for several centuries has been on the whole faithful. Secondly, it is intended to inculcate in them a spirit of enquiry, rationality and scientific method so that they may be all equipped to enter into the new age of technology, which is inescapable for any nation. I am very glad that the essence of this Policy, its spirit, has been already animating you in the programme which you have introduced here. This shows that it is difficult to find much newness in the new Education Policy.

I must say that when you are introducing Indian Culture, comparative Religion, Scientific Method etc. as compulsory core courses in undergraduate studies, great caution has to be exercised in the selection of the material which is placed before the students, in the kind of methodology that is adopted in making them acquainted with these subjects, and, moreover, in tying up all this with the subjects of their studies, whether they be Physics or Biology, History or Economics.

## Indian Culture

Take for example, the first subject, Indian Culture, elements of which are matters of compulsory study in your courses. It is good that every Indian is made acquainted with the culture of this land. But what is meant by the culture of this country? Is it, as some people say, the Vedic culture of yore? Is it what was prevalent in the age of the Guptas? Is it something which was widespread in this country in the time of the Mughals? Or, is it the kind of culture which since 1857 or so our universities, colleges and high schools have been inculcating? Great caution has to be exercised in not identifying the totality of Indian culture with any of these cultures: Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or Parsee, or the culture which was dominant in any particular epoch of Indian history.

## Comparative Religion

Similarly, when "Comparative Religion" is taught, one has to be very careful about the methodology adopted. Actually, in many Western universities although this term "Comparative Religion" was popular at one time, now another term 'History of Religion' has become popular. In any case it means acquaintance with at least the basic elements of the major religions of the world, if not all the religions of the world. It is argued that it is desirable to have it as a compulsory core course; but, for what is it desirable? Some believe that a study of Comparative Religion will help promote harmony among the followers of different religions. But, as sociologists and psychologists have already demonstrated in various cases, acquaintance with a person, an institution or a way of life, may not necessarily make one develop a liking for it, respect for it, or even a tolerance of it. On the other hand, non-knowledge of something, a distance from it, may enable one to have some sort of tolerance of it, if not respect for it. This is found not only in inter-personal relations but also in the case of contacts among different societies, ways of life, institutions, etc. Knowledge of a thing may not necessarily endear it to one; it may not even develop in one any sort of respect or tolerance. On the other hand, ignorance of something may not also necessarily prompt one to tolerate

it. Ignorance may breed in one all kind of suspicions, all kinds of notions as to what it is, which may make one fear it, or have hatred or contempt for it. Much depends upon the kind of knowledge, the way it is imparted and the attitude of the learner before it can be said that knowledge of something makes one like it, respect it, or at least tolerate it. So when a number of religions or cultures are sought to be taught, it has to be necessarily on a selective basis, because a religion like Christianity, Islam or Hinduism cannot be taught in all its detail (i.e. its origins, development and aspects) satisfactorily in a brief course or two stretching over a year or two. So, the way it is done is very important. Otherwise, inclusion of 'Comparative Religion' may become only a sort of empty ritual, or even engender prejudices for or against some religions.

### Scientific Method

The same thing is true in the case of Scientific Method. In this century at the present juncture, nothing can be more important than an understanding of science and technology. In order to understand them we have to know what the method of science is? or the methods of science are? But along with an idea of scientific method and a broad general outline of what scientific achievement has been it is very important to know the limitations of scientific method; and to be aware (i) that the unknown is far vaster than what is known, and (ii) all that is may not be knowable. Ignorance of the capacities of scientific method is as dangerous as ignorance of even the basic elements of it. That science and technology can make man omniscient and omnipotent,--this is as much a superstition as to hold that they have been only harmful and that, hence, they are dangerous and should not be pursued. Today it is impossible to avoid more and more technology which is pro-ecological.

### Multidisciplinary Approach & Work Experience

From the above examples one may conclude that whenever we wish to make anything a compulsory subject of study in an educational institution either at the school, junior college or college

level, great care has to be exercised in deciding to do so and in the selection of material to be taught and the duration for which it is to be taught. Nevertheless, I am sure that today the kind of undisciplinary approach to education, according to which if a man is to study philosophy or physics, it alone is to be taught, and if a man is trying to learn literature, commerce or engineering, only that subject alone is to be taught,—that kind of approach is outdated. Today in the best universities of Europe, America or the Soviet Union, nobody is allowed to take a degree in medicine, technology or engineering without having a knowledge of, or atleast a smattering of, social sciences and humanities. Similarly, nobody can take a degree in literature, philosophy, history, economics, or sociology without having some sort of grounding in the natural and life sciences. A multidisciplinary approach without sacrificing specialisation, and theoretical knowledge along with practical training: this is what should prevail in our educational institutions. The Dayalbagh Institute is to be commended for its on going programme along these lines.

### **Dedication-Zeal & Success-efficiency Correlation**

May I now reflect on another factor which I notice here. Whether in this country or in other countries, we see that administrators of educational institutions as well as teachers who have a faith, a kind of ideology in which they believe, for which they live, are always more serious in imparting education and in managing educational institutions. The Jesuits, for example, wherever they have established their institutions, in Europe, Latin America, Asia or Africa, are dedicated to them. Take for instance the persons from the West who have established schools and hospitals in Africa and Asia, or those of Asiatic origin who have done so for the glory of Christ. Compare them with those which have been established by governments or by private associations or societies etc., which do not have a particular life ideal, a faith which can direct their lives, and give sense and meaning to whatever they do and think. We find much difference between these two. So, it is not a matter of surprise if those who are in charge of this educational institution and a number of teachers who are teaching in it have a faith, which illuminates their lives, and gives them a sense of purpose

and direction. We find this in the case of some others too, e.g. the Ramakrishna Mission, the Arya Samaj etc. We also find this in the case of Marxists, Gandhians etc., engaged in educational and social work of different types. In all such cases what they undertake is carried on with efficiency and dedication, not found in those undertaken without ideals, ideology, commitment and zeal.

## Impact of Cloistered Virtue

In the end I would like to raise an issue. How far is it possible for the members of institutions or organisations like this,—whether at Sabarmati or Santiniketan, Pondicherry or Puttaparthi, Kangri or Agra,—to take the spirit prevalent within their campuses outside them? How to make the rapport and camaraderie among the dedicated members of these societies, orders or organisations transcend the boundaries of their cloisters and spread them in the larger society? In what way can the commitment of, for example, the Franciscans or the monks of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Orders, the Arya Samajis or the Dayalbaghis, be communicated to others? Closed societies subject to a rigorous rule and an unquestioned authority, living communally within cloisters, may be able to be highly disciplined, cultivate virtue, develop character, maintain integrity, and live for ideals. Can protected goodness of the ashramas, viharas, maths and monasteries, or the discipline that flourishes within certain parties, societies, orders and organisations, flourish outside them? Are they not like greenhouse plants? Virtue, character and discipline are of real worth only when they stand firm in the actual world of daily work, temptation and trial, and bear the wear and tear of ordinary life. Chastity is not difficult for an antahpurika or a nun. Cloistered virtue cannot have great value. It is easier to be self-restrained, disciplined and live peacefully with others as a member of a self-sufficient tight-knit community dwelling in a complex, aloof from human habitations, governed by inflexible rules and firm authority, than as a member of a family with all its affections, attachments, aversions, tensions, cares and worries, living in a village or town. When people who have been educated in, or have been members of, these secluded and disciplined establishments come out and live as citizens in the larger society, do they make a significant impact upon those

around them, or, at least, are their lives in any important way different from those of others? Do those coming out of madrasahs, pathasalas, gurukuls, vidyapiths, ashrams, maths, convents, public schools or missionary colleges lead impeccably better lives, and contribute to ethical and spiritual advancement or material progress in a more substantial way, than those coming out of ordinary educational institutions?

## Morality & Motivation

It is good that there are these organisations, societies and missions doing educational and social work. The world may be worse without them. But their establishment, continuation and multiplication, does not seem to be making the world more moral and spiritual, even gradually. The point sought to be made is that the unselfishness, altruism and goodness of the members of these religious or spiritual societies or organisations does not seem to be transforming those educated or trained by them into moral beings to a remarkably greater extent than those educated and trained by others. There is also no clear evidence that either numerically or qualitatively the schools and colleges of such societies or organisations have contributed a greater number of creative alumni or altruistic citizens than other institutions. I conclude: The task of making people moral and spiritual on a considerable scale either by example or precept, or even by both, has not been till now much of a success. The examples of Mahavira, the Buddha and Christ support this.

If dharmic jivan or the good life is considered one of the highest ends, nothing can be a more important problem of investigation for behavioural and social sciences than this: how to motivate people to lead moral lives?

[Edited]

## VIII

### *Bharathiar University*

20 III 1987

#### **Equality of all Countries & Peoples**

I may utilise this occasion to point out that it is a poem in *Purananuru* (192), an anthology of the Sangam age, which for the first time in India clearly asserted the equality of all peoples and lands:

"All places are similar to me; all are my kith and kin. Suffering and freedom from it are of similar nature; death is not something new. Life is neither all sweetness and joy, nor all misery. The plight of our precious soul tossed in the torrent of fate is like that of a raft in the middle of a mighty river in floods, rushing along knocking against rocks and boulders. Having learnt this truth from the teaching of great scholars, I do not esteem the highly placed or despise the lowly".

—Kanian Poongunranar

Indian ethos and values have not been enunciated with greater brevity or clarity elsewhere: No race, nation or class is superior to others and no country, town or village is sacred; life is neither wholly joyous, nor miserable. The Sangam literature idealized love and glorified domestic life based on it. The ideal of such a life ought to be to work for others welfare and to attain perfection. It held that to lead a virtuous life for the sake of heaven is to commercialize the former, while the right thing is to do so for the sake of perfection. To be perfect is to be wise, cultured, loving and socially beneficial. To be eminent is to successfully perform one's duty, overcoming all difficulties. In one of my books I have called this "Tamil Cosmopolitanism", and Tiruvalluvar's teaching an 'integrated philosophy of life'. (Vide *Philosophy In India*, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 60-2). If this great ethical egalitarianism found in Tamil

classics could be adhered to by all, this world would be a better and happier place for all.

### "Bharat Commonwealth"

This university has been named after Mahakavi Subramania Bharati, who, according to the eminent scholar and critic Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, was "radiantly autochthonous and bracingly modern". The poet conceived Bharatdesh as the land in which there would be no penury or hate, in which people of all its regions from the Ganges to Kaveri and from Kasi to Kanchi will form a commonwealth in which all would form one race, clan and caste, every individual in it being of equal status and value. Bharat has millions of faces, "But one sole life, majestic, strong": many "are her tongues for utterance, And yet her heart is one". (Bharati, *Chosen Poems and Prose*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 35). In the Bharat Commonwealth "there shall be none of low degree, And none shall be oppressed". (Ibid., p. 44) If the teachers, students and alumni of the university named after him were to cherish, realise and propagate this ideal, the unity and integrity of our nation as well as our democracy would be consolidated.

### Indian Universities

When one, however, takes a critical look at education and science in India as a whole there is little scope for complacency. A considerable number of our universities and colleges are imparting not only sub-standard education, but are "notorious for rampant casteism, regionalism and inbreeding", and "have become virtual battlefields in which political and other factions, backed by teachers and aided by other staff, often fight pitched battles for power and supremacy". The efforts of the NCERT, NIEPA and UGC "to improve content and quality of education, modifying priorities and objectives, and correlating the quantitative and qualitative output of educated manpower with the requirements of these for various tasks connected with national production and development, have not succeeded". (*Challenge of Education---A Policy Perspective*,

Ministry of Education, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 47-8, 61-2.) While these comments apply to some of the universities and colleges which are established and/or supported by the Central Government, they do not apply to some of the universities and colleges established and supported by state governments. Only a few days back an eminent scholar, who worked for decades in a central university and has occupied with distinction very high positions in public life, education and science administration, diplomacy and government, and continues to do so, told me that only one central university would be among the five best universities in the country.

## Indian Councils

Moreover, some of the organisations which owe nothing to state governments and are not dependent on them have not distinguished themselves. The recent report of the experts' committee which reviewed the CSIR declared it to be an "unwieldy organisation" lacking focus or direction and suffering from "a crisis of identity". According to the report, "science in CSIR has perished while a few scientists have flourished", and it "has tended to foster hierarchy or bureaucracy and stifle creativity". ("Times of India", 2-3-1987.) Similarly, the concerned minister did not express satisfaction regarding the functioning of AIIMS he commented that it has not been as accountable as it should have been to the needs of society and that whatever newer patterns of teaching and higher standards of medical education it might have developed have not been properly disseminated. ("Times of India", 13-3-1987.) In the same way, the concerned minister of state has charged the ICAR with failure to create a suitable environment for scientists to produce their best. Its research management, according to him, was based on lop-sided priorities; and its research output vis-a-vis its very large scientific strength, he declared, has to be reviewed. ("Times of India", 15-3-1987.) The report on the basis of the review of workings of IITs has also recently come out, and they have not received any high encomiums in it. According to that report, their achievements do not seem to be entirely commensurate with their vaunted prestige, the public money spent on them and the aid and support they received from abroad.

If it is presumed that these reports and comments are more or

less fair and objective, education and science in India as a whole are not as they ought to be. It is doubtful whether reviews of the workings of the Councils for researches in social and humanistic sciences would be much more favourable; these organisations and the disciplines they deal with also may be faring no better.

The National Policy on Education-1986 and its Programme of Action [HRD Ministry (Department of Education), New Delhi, May & August 1986] have fixed the objectives relating to education at all levels as well as described the means for achieving them. The reports of the review committees on various Councils and Institutes have outlined the measures to be taken to improve their workings, or will do so in due course. It remains to be seen how the state governments, the civil servants in New Delhi and state capitals, the heads of commissions and councils and education and science administrators at various levels, will implement and monitor the policy with the resources to be made available, and how our teachers scholars, and scientists will utilise this opportunity.

### **Prior Change of Attitudes & Values Essential**

Radical transformation, it must be said, will not be achieved unless prevalent values and attitudes change. Today in India it is the persons with financial, political or administrative power who have material advantages and command respect, and not the scientists, scholars, literary men and artists. It is the vice chancellors, directors, chairmen and members of commissions and councils and those in charge of educational, scientific and cultural establishments who are considered more important than even reputed scientists, scholars, litterateurs and artists; and much more important than the former are the men in the administrative service. What the Prime Minister told the Lehmann Professor of Economics at Columbia University is a fact: "Vice Chancellors have to stand outside a Deputy Secretary's office for a whole day for an appointment". (*Frontline*, Madras, May 31- June 13, 1986, p.44) And the fate of a scientist or scholar seeking an appointment with a vice-chancellor, director, director-general or a chairman, is not much different. Consequently, the ambition of most scientists or scholars is to attain the status equal to that of secretaries, or at least,

additional or joint secretaries to government. No wonder a distinguished nuclear scientist is reported to have said that as one cannot have either freedom or prestige without being a secretary to government, he had attempted and succeeded in becoming one. Unless attitudes and values of this sort change and the status and emoluments of our teachers, scholars and scientists become equal to those in the Indian administrative service, devotion to teaching and learning cannot be exacted. Our Commissions, Councils, Universities, colleges and other establishments have to be debureaucratised, made autonomous and run only by those who teach and investigate. Unless teaching in a school is effectively considered as important as teaching in a university, and work in a class room, library and laboratory as important as that in a government secretariat, an education and scientific revolution may not occur.

## The Critical Spirit & Empirical Approach for Creativity

Contemporary Indian work in any science—humanistic, social or natural—is by and large not creative. The reason for this is our schools, colleges and universities do not set minds free. "The fundamental drawback of our present education system", our Prime Minister rightly observed, "is the absence of the questioning spirit". The hallmark of the product of a good school is "nonconformist personalities working together as a team for a greater cause". (His speech at Dehra Dun on 3-11-1985. *The Hindu*, 4-11-1985). Studies of the creative work of those who brought about mutations in the history of thought have shown that intense scepticism towards traditional ideas, axioms and dogmas and complete openmindedness are its common features. Without them a familiar object, situation, problem or data cannot be seen in a new light or context, and relations, patterns or functional analogies not seen by anyone before cannot be seen.

One of our medieval scientists (Ramachandra in *Rasendrachintamani*) stated that he discarded everything he could not verify by experiment, even if it was taught by learned men. Real teachers, according to him, are those who have verified by experiments what they teach. Another (Yasodhara in *Rasaprakasasudhakara*) declared he wrote only that which was based on his conviction and

observation and not on hearsay. And Aryabhata proclaimed that he relied on two things only : the grace of God and the use of his own intelligence. (*Aryabhatiyam*) Our best philosophers relied on their own experience and reasoning, accepting what was believed to be revelation or tradition only when it was not contradicted by the former. The Buddha was an Ehipassika, i.e. one who taught 'come and see for yourself'. Nagarjuna was able to formulate his philosophy only by setting at naught the brahmanical tradition and sastras of his father and forefathers. Sankaracharya did not totally accept the authority of any previous commentator of the Upanishads and Bramasutras; his greatest contribution was the emphasis he laid on enquiry, personal experience and logical reflection on it. Ramanujacharya disputed and demolished his own teacher Yadavaprakasa's interpretation of the Upanishads. Indian thinkers and scientists of yore had open, critical and questioning minds; so they could be creative. We should cultivate and foster this spirit.

As a great Indian philosopher Abhinava Gupta said:

Urdhvordhvamaruhya yadarthatattvam  
 dhih pasyati srantimavedayanti,  
 phalam tadadyaih parikalpitanam  
 vivekasopanaparamparanam

It means: Reason can behold truth tirelessly climbing higher and higher on the ladder of discriminative thinking, the steps of which are constituted by the successive doctrines formulated by earlier thinkers. (Comm. on Bharata)

# IX

## *Rabindra Bharati University*

4 V 1987

### **What is Indian Culture ?**

There are those who identify Indian culture with what is found in the Sruti-smruti-itihasa-puranas and Indian philosophy with the "Brahmanical" Shad-darsanas, and even today echo the claim that the whole world learnt the principles of ethics from "the first-born of this country" (etaddesa prasutasya sakasad agrajanmanah svam svam caritram siksheran pruthivyam sarva manavah). India, they maintain, never learnt or borrowed anything of value or importance from others, and has no need to do so now or in future. A hierarchical system of caste with priests dominating it and world-negating mystical philosophy emanating from forest abodes are sought to be established as the core of Indian civilization. That was never the case.

The Buddhist, Jaina and Lokayatika darsanas are as much authentically Indian as the Vedic. The Sangam literature and the hymns of the Alvars and Nayanars constitute an equally important and valuable component of our intellectual and spiritual tradition. When we consider the middle ages, Advaita Vedanta is as much Indian as Visistadvaita and Dvaita Vedantas, and, certainly, Kabir and Chaitanya, Nanak and Gobind Singh, Basava and Vemana, Muin-ud-din Chisti and Nizam-ud-din Aulia, Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Wali-Ullah, form as much a part of Indian tradition as the Vedantic. Besides all these are the other streams of Indian tradition-the artistic, scientific and technological. Those who disparage the Upanishads and the Gita, Manu and Sankara misunderstand and distort Indian tradition as those who spurn all that is avaidic and non-brahmanical. Profound truths are to be found in abundance, for instance, in the teachings of Guru Ravidas, Guru Gobind Singh and Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Aulia. Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Vinoba Bhave do not

exclusively represent India; the lives and thinking of M.N. Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad and B.R. Ambedkar are as much authentically Indian as those of anyone else. Rabindranath was perhaps the first who showed the way for understanding Indian history and culture in an inclusive and comprehensive way.

### 'Svadharma'

'Duty', 'the unusual stress put on correct action', along with the admission that there is no such thing as a single universal standard of duty and that all people cannot be rationally expected to lead the same way of life—this, according to W. Norman Brown, may be the vitalizing or determining element in Indian Civilization, which has had a continuity from the 3rd millennium B.C. to the present. (see his article on 'Cultural Continuity in India' in the *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. XX, no. 4, 1961.) Was not Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Aulia expressing such a conception when looking at the passing of a Hindu religious procession he observed: "Every people has its own path of righteousness, beliefs and focus of adulation"? (*Har qaum rast rahay, dinay wa qibela gahay*.) Is the idea of Svadharma rightly understood different from this?

### Indian Quest for Eros, Wealth & Power

Trivarga, what F. Edgerton called the 'threefold norm', i.e. dharma (virtue), artha (prosperity) and kama (pleasure), was, he indicated, the normal and acceptable norm to all in India from the earliest times to the present. This he identified as the dominant idea in the formation of Indian culture. (his article in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 62, 1942.) Moksha or Nirvana (liberation) was an 'extraordinary norm' which came to be postulated as the fourth end of life much later and was not also accepted by all. Only for those who did so, knowledge of the ultimate truth, devotion of God or disinterested action were considered to be alternate ways of salvation. It is therefore not correct to say, as Mircea Eliade did, that all Indian thought and action have a nostalgia for Liberation. On the basis of the Kavya-nataka-alankara literature and of the sastras dealing with kama and artha

as well as of inscriptions, paintings and sculptures, one may say Indian life, thought and action have always been obsessed by eros, wealth and power. There is no evidence that moksha received greater attention or emphasis than kama in classical or medieval India. The commentator on Bhartruhari asserted: The wise utilise all their time in pursuit of knowledge or ecstasy. Maybe the wise do the same now? (e.g. Russell's Autobiography) Sarvada jnanih-thaya va kamagoshthya va panditanam kalo yapayitavyah, nat-vanyatha. (Comm. on verse 37 in "Sringara Sataka": samsare svapnesare-dve gati panditanam.)

## So, Duty!

Could it be, therefore, said that the following may provide the basis for what many Indians consider as the right way of life?

"I count it enough to live and die as a man, loving and trusting the world". (Tagore's letter of 1891.)

"Nothing is more beautiful or great than to perform the ordinary duties of one's daily life simply and naturally". (Tagore's letter of 1892)

*Andhra University*

30 V 1987

**Politics & Morality**

Ultimately whether in Asia, Europe, America or Africa, peace, justice and prosperity could be achieved only if international relations are based on politics infused with morality. We have in India a line of thinking going back to very ancient times which maintained the doctrine of inseparability of artha and dharma—of material gain and the moral law, and of the superiority of righteousness to material gain and of the desirability of achieving victory without war. The state and its rulers are for the sake of dharma; nothing is a greater good for them than dharma. These ideas are contained in a number of discourses in the Rajadharma portion of *Santiparva* in the *Mahabharata*:

Arthasiddheh param dharmam.

Ayuddhenaiva Vijayam vardhayed.

—Vamadevagita, *Mahabharata*, *Santiparva*

Dharmaya raja bhavati.

Dharmah sreyaskaratamo rajnam.

—Utathyagita, op. cit.

The Buddhist scripture *Suvarnaprabhasottamasutra*, Asoka's edicts and the great philosopher Nagarjuna's *Ratnavali* advocate the same position. But in contrast to this there has been another school which advocated that politics need not be tied up with ethics, statecraft should not be subordinate to morality, and that national interest must come before human interests. If the first is a school of principle, the second is that of expediency. The arthasastras and nitisastras elaborate the doctrine of the second type. In all major cultures there have been theoreticians of both these types, while most rulers and politcains all over the world at all times have been

to a greater or lesser extent followers of the sort of politics and statecraft found in the arthasastras.

There have been conflicts and wars not only for the sake of material gain, but for the sake of ideologies considered to be immutable, universal and absolute truths and for ways of life based on them. Even in modern times wars or conflicts to vindicate or demolish religious and political ideologies have not ceased. This situation will be transformed if the following are accepted: Universal truths are the concern of science and free untrammelled scientific inquiry will establish from time to time which they are; whatever is anti-scientific or irrational cannot be universal truth; and whatever is suprarational and demonstrated to be neither true nor false by scientific inquiry may be absolute truth for one who accepts it as such, and while he may live by it and die for it, he has no right to impose it on others. It follows that no way of life or sociopolitical organisation is perfect, as every one of them is based on truth taken to be absolute by some; and absolute truth is indemonstrable. The 'anekantattva' (multifacetedness/multidimensionality) of truth, the mistake of taking a fragmentary truth as complete truth and the idiocy of fighting over fragmentary truths, have been pointed out in many Jaina and Hindu works. Only when this is put into practice the world will be saved.

In July 1964 I wrote as follows:

"A policy which refuses to take any ideology or way of life as final, perfect and worthy of being imposed on the whole world, which maintains that all conflicts are in principle capable of being solved through mutually tolerant intercourse of minds, and which believes that peaceful coexistence is possible on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation without any insistence on conversion to what is considered to be the truth and the right way of living, is very much needed today and for a long time to come."

## XI

# *Sri Krishnadevaraya University*

29 VI 1987

## **Is there a Crisis in Higher Education?**

I may be permitted to utilise this opportunity to express a few ideas on higher education in our country, which are not necessarily those of any organisation or institution.

In a recent newsreport I read that there is a 'crisis' in higher education, due to its 'massification', partly caused by political pressure, which led to greater political interference in the daily functioning of universities. This, the report stated, was the unanimous view of the Vice Chancellors of three universities in our principal metropolis. It is also reported that they did not appear to be enthusiastic about the New Education Policy, as "much will depend on how it is implemented". (*The Hindu*, Delhi Edition, May 9, 1987).

In 1941 Rabindranath Tagore gave an address on the "Crisis in Civilisation". In 1953 appeared A.J. Toynbee's *Civilisation on Trial*. If one reads the reports of various commissions on higher education in India, one finds that every one of them talks about a crisis in higher education. It may be remembered that crisis is nothing but a turningpoint when a momentous decision has to be taken. Crises in civilisation or education are nothing new; they recur.

What is the nature of the crisis in our higher education? During 1917-19 the then Principal of Ripon College, Calcutta, R.S. Trivedi presented a memorandum to the Saddler Commission. In it he stated that the University of Calcutta was "altogether a foreign plant imported into this country", and that the new education system was introduced in entire ignorance and complete defiance of the existing social order. In a speech at Madras in March 1925 Mahatma Gandhi remarked that education received in the colleges

in India did not correspond to the life around in the villages in which alone real India was to be found.

### Is dealienation identical with rustication?

According to thinking of the above sort higher education in India has become an alien system because it is not in tune with traditional Indian society and rural life. If traditional Indian society is hierarchical and unjust and if rural life is based upon unremitting toil, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, educational institutions which defy such a social order and do not correspond to such a life have to be commended. But are our educational institutions really so? Does teaching and research in them inspire one to strive for an egalitarian society, to eradicate poverty, and to live wisely and rationally? I think the great problem with our colleges and universities is that they do not motivate their products to replace the existing social order with a rational, just and humane social order.

### Can higher education by itself provide employment?

Some people point out that as our higher education does not enable one to become self-employed and leads to educated unemployment on a large-scale, it is to be condemned. It is good to be educated and employed; but there seems to be no greater virtue in uneducated unemployment than in educated unemployment. Higher education of whatever type cannot by itself provide employment to all who receive it. In 1986 in the European Community there were 23 million unemployed workers, and today in Britain 3 million are unemployed. In whatever way school education and higher education may be improved, they cannot by themselves lead to full employment of all those who receive them. By just not receiving them also one cannot get employed. For creation of adequate employment opportunities, for training individuals for jobs which are available and skills which are needed, social transformation of a radical type is necessary. Unless the developmental possibilities and the manpower needs for the next 20 years or so are determined and long-term planning of education

undertaken, educated unemployment is bound to persist in spite of qualitative improvement of education.

## Scientific Progress & Social Progress

Our science teaching and research are criticised because they are not leading to any significant social and economic development. Acceleration of scientific progress does not directly result in acceleration of social progress. While technological progress depends on the rate of utilisation of scientific knowledge, it is adoption of the best available form of technology in agricultural and industrial production that leads to prosperity.

## Relevance of higher education

It is charged that our higher education is irrelevant. By this it is probably meant that it imparts abstract inert knowledge which cannot be at once utilised in action. Much student unrest arises out of students being restricted to a marginal role at time when youthful energies are at their peak. To be in a college and university for years without a responsible social role and uncommitted to adult institutions leads to tension and frustration. This is a cause of student unrest. By ensuring that only those who are fit and motivated join colleges and universities unrest can be minimised.

It is important to understand the nature of relevance. The relevant is not always to what exists only; it could be also to what is going to be. Much that is learnt in an agricultural college may not be relevant to the type of agriculture with its low productivity carried on in the villages today. But once ways of having another type of agriculture are found, what is learnt in a college could be highly relevant. To say pure Mathematics, Metaphysics or Painting are irrelevant to village life, and only village life is real life is philistinism. To say that Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* or the paintings at Lepakshi are irrelevant because they could not in the slightest degree alleviate the miseries of the starving, is to condemn civilisation. We need pure science, poetry and philosophy as much as we need technology. Only all these should not be accessible to

a select few only. This means the goal must be every adult should have the opportunity to acquire a capacity to enjoy Shakuntala and the paintings at Lepakshi.

The relevant is that which gives insight into reality, social and physical, providing an understanding of the past from which we have inherited and the future into which we believe we are moving.

### What's a real college or university?

The greatest defect of our higher education system seems to be the lack of an intellectual community. Colleges and universities are set up and given external accompaniments, but they remain shallow within, without the warmth and fellowship of an intellectual community. The values and standards which are the essence of western civilisation, the spirit of inquiry and criticism which is the basis of all scientific progress—these are not acquired by most in our higher education institutions, nor are the values and standards which sustained Indian culture for centuries.

The educated man must be a man responsible for civilisation. Education should supply an adequate number of common ideas which can give an effective unity and consequently an effective influence on contemporary problems. We need an education which gives coherence and unity to our interests and intentions. Colleges and universities should impart to their products the power of understanding and judgement. Then only one can understand the interplay of ideas, forces and events, chart in some fashion their direction and obtain a glimmer of their meaning.

All that is said above can be done only by a college or a university. But today in India there is no real college or university. A college should have consensual democracy, and a structure in which its members can equally participate in decision-making and do what they ought to do with minimal controls. A university is that which has a unified vision of the end, and is governed by consent and after consultation.

### An Indian Model, how to evolve?

Universities in India are sometimes branded as alien implan-

tations. India has had always a tradition of higher education. In different forms we did have universities long before they came to exist in Europe. In modern times when universities came to be established, the model adopted was that of London with some changes that were necessary. In more recent times the model has been that of Sussex and Essex. If parliamentary democracy, the legal system and technology can be borrowed and blended harmoniously with our culture, why cannot a system of education be also adopted and integrated with our culture? It may be remembered that the Paris and Bologna models were adopted by Germany, England, Spain and other countries. New models evolved in Goettingen and Halle later. Since then many other types of universities have come into being. Even in 1964 it was lamented that American universities "had not yet developed their full identity". One wonders whether even today there is a unique American model completely different from all foreign models. Maybe in the fullness of time each nation would evolve its own model or models.

More important than building, equipment etc. are the socio-economic factors outside the education system. Difference in the quality of education between nations is not so much due to the inputs into the system but the milieu within which it functions.

*Gulbarga University*

2 II 1988

**What have "elite" institutions achieved?**

This gives me an opportunity to have an interchange of ideas with the scholars and scientists of a young university as well as of colleges in a relatively not well-developed and not easily accessible area of Deccan.

Some of the universities of this type have done either work of a high order or have the potentiality to do so, though they have not received the attention and the financial assistance in proportion to their achievements and capabilities. Consider, on the one hand, the encouragement, care and resources lavished on central and state metropolitan universities, institutes of technology, national laboratories and scientific centres, and assess what they have accomplished in the theoretical domain and contributed to national development. Consider, on the other hand, what the central and state governments and grants-disbursing agencies have done for state universities, especially those in mofussil, with their numerous departments of pure and applied sciences, engineering and technology, in addition to those of humanities and social sciences, and for engineering universities and colleges (e.g. at Roorkee, Guindy or Coimbatore), and evaluate their achievement in these fields and contributions to national development. Then, it might be found difficult to conclude that the achievement and contributions of the former group have been surpassingly superior to those of the latter. Some of those who matter have become cognizant of this situation and are thinking of possible remedial action.

**On Creativity & Excellence**

In the last two months our Prime Minister and a couple of our

leading scientists have deplored the mediocrity prevailing in our educational and scientific institutions and have stressed the necessity to nurture talent, stimulate creativity and achieve excellence. This has been a concern shared by quite a few of us, and not expressed by these for the first time recently. (A few years back I participated and gave a lecture in a seminar on Creativity organised at Jaipur by Professor Daya Krishna.) Even in ancient and medieval times some Indian thinkers have discussed the nature of creativity, *pratibha* or *prajna*. Much study and research has also been done on this subject in the west recently.

Fostering of creativity would be possible in the following circumstances. The system of higher education and research is a sub-system of our total education system, which is itself an integral part of our socio-economic and political pattern. No radical change in the first is possible without a preceding similar change in the second, which would again be impossible without such an occurrence in the last. The *gurusishya* syndrome is prevalent in the former two, while in religious, social and political life 'babaism', the authority of irrational tradition, party systems lacking internal democracy and personality cult dominate. Debureaucratisation of educational and research institutions is not possible unless the present procedures and routine in them and the grip of civil service over them vanishes. Management styles in these should not be like those in public or business administration. When most of the senior scientists and scholars with established reputations prefer to join as chairmen or members of advisory committees to government, planning bodies and grants-giving agencies, or as educational administrators or 'scientific research managers', their example catches on. Science and scholarship are jealous mistresses; they demand complete loyalty and wholetime attention. Only if and when society in general and government value single-minded devotion to learning and continuous quest for truth above all other things, there will be motivation for their pursuit.

Our pioneering modern scientists have emphasized this. May I quote them? "We should not live in the glory of the past", "We should show by our work, by our intellect and by our service that we are not decadent". (J.C. Bose, from *Indian Scientist*, p. 106.) "A long period of intellectual stagnation has produced in us a habit of dependence on authority...Reason was bound to the wheel of faith...Intellectual progress was handicapped...Reason has to be set

free". (P.C.Ray, Presidential Address, Ind. Sc. Cong., 1920.) "We live in a modern age; we live in an age of research; a period of intense striving to create new realms of thought, to penetrate the mystery of nature by the use of all intellectual and material forces under human command...We in India, as a people cannot afford merely to stand aside and be merely passive spectators of this..." (C.V. Raman, Convocation Address, Banaras Hindu University, 1926.) Our academics of subsequent generations have by and large not heeded these exhortations.

Moreover, ours has become unlike the scientific societies of Europe and USA in which "there is emulation without envy, ambition without jealousy and contention without animosity".

### No Resources Constraint, but lack of Dedication

The governments of Jawaharlal Nehru and his successors have been giving financial support for higher education and research in all the sciences—natural, applied, technological, as well as humanistic and social—in a way which does not happen in any other developing country. But we scholars and scientists have not been able to show results commensurate with this, not merely because of lack of adequate equipment or libraries. According to Professor D. Wohleben, an experimental solid-state physicist of the University of Kolin (FDR), to get "mind-stuck about big equipment" is to get stuck scientifically". "The cheaper and smaller the equipment the larger the productivity",—he observed. (*The Hindu*, May 24, 1987.) Professor Paul C.W. Chu, a pioneer of superconductivity and leader of the research team which produced superconductivity at "a balmy 98 K (-283° F)", considers that it is perseverance over time that can solve problems, not money alone. (*Time*, August 10, 1987.)

Most of us academics who are now in the late fifties or sixties have not done as well as we could and ought to have, because we lacked the necessary will, devotion and perseverance. Some of us who have achieved some sort of recognition—at the most an FRS, a National Award, a Padma Bhushan or some such thing—somehow get close to the establishment, deplore what's now happening in our universities and research institutions and tend to sermonize. None of us set about courageously, actively and unselfishly fighting the forces within and outside these

institutions which are responsible for the present situation nor are most of us content to ignore everything else and work day and night with unflagging zeal solely for the dissemination and advancement of knowledge.

*Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam*

8 IV 1988

**Dharma ever-changing**

A few days ago it was reported that a Swami of a Samaj had challenged the Head of a Math to a public debate on the question whether or not "Sati" had been sanctioned by the Hindu sacred scriptures. Long ago the best scholars have shown that the *srutis* and authoritative ancient *smritis* do not sanction any such thing. Reason and good sense, as well as the conscience of any contemporary civilized person, are unanimous in considering it cruel, barbarous and outrageous. Moreover, even if some *dharma*-*sastra*ic passage were to be produced to show that it had been sanctioned, the greatest *smritis* have long laid down what ought to be done in such cases. According to Manu, any 'dharma' which results in unhappiness and regress and horrifies the world must not be performed. (*Dharmam capi asukhodarkan lokavikrushtameva ca*, IV. 176.) Dharma is only that which is ever practised by the learned and the good who are free from aversion and attachment, as well as in accordance with reason'. Nothing that makes one ashamed and anything which does not give one *tushti* (satisfaction/happiness/sense of fulfilment) not be dharma. (Manu, XII. 35-7.) Moreover, Manu points out, *dharma*s differ from age to age. (*Dharmah - nrnam yugahrasanurupatah*, I.85.) *Yajnavalkya*'s view is identical. Even if something is 'dharma', i.e. even if it has been prescribed, what will not lead to heaven and what is opposed to civilised consensus or is likely to be condemned by society, ought not to be performed.\* Interestingly, *Vijnanesvara* gives veal-

\* *Vidvadbhihssevitassad bhirnityamadvesharagibhih, hridayenabhyanujnatah yo dharmah tam nibodhata*, Manu, II.I. *Hridaya*, explains *Medhatithi*, is *chitta*, mind, reason.

+ *Asvargyam lokavidvishtam dharmyamapya charennatu*, VI.156. *Lokavidvish-tam*=*Lokabhisastijananam*; *Dharmyam-vihitam*: *Vijnanesvara*.

offering to a honoured guest (madhuparka-govadhadikam), prescribed in some dharmashastra or by some tradition, as an example of a 'dharma' which ought not to be practised. Human sacrifice, "sati" etc. might have the sanction of some scripture or sastra, and might have been practised by some at some time. But as today they appear to us to be irrational, cruel, outrageous and barbarous, they should be eliminated from civilised society. A public or private debate on their possible sastraic sanction has no practical relevance.

## Critical Traditionalism

In a recent lecture an eminent retired judge of our highest court made a powerful plea for creating conditions necessary to achieve equality between the sexes guaranteed by the Constitution. I fully share his concern in this matter and join him and others in condemning irrationality, inequality, intolerance and injustice wherever they may exist—in scriptures and religion as practised or in social organisation and customs. But an indiscriminate fight against religion and/or tradition as such does not seem to be either right or rational.

There is much in our culture, tradition and classical literature which is glorious, and much that is outmoded, irrational, inequitous and irrelevant. We must critically appropriate the former, and fight with all our might against the latter. I would, for example, bring under the former the Nalopakhyana and Savitryupakhyana of the *Mahabharata*, Valmiki's 'great story of Sita' (Sitayah charitam mahat) and Ritadhvaja-Madalasa story of the *Markandeya Purana* under the former, while I would include in the latter category the story in the same Purana of that stupid pativrata wife of the leper Kaushika of Pratishtanapura, whom she daily used to carry on her shoulders to the house of a prostitute. As in other cultures, in ours too woman has been "empowered" as well as "enslaved", deified as well as chat-telised.

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\* Valmiki himself called his 'entire kavya' as such. (Ramayana, I.4.7.)

## Conjugal Fidelity

One of the glories of Indian culture is its formulation of the Pativrata-Ekapatnivrata Ideal. A Pativrata is not a slave or sex object. She is exclusively devoted to her husband (ananyabhava), is totally involved in him and his welfare (anuraktachetas). She shares his happiness and unhappiness; her mind does not think of anyone else in his place. In whatever situation he may be he is dear and desirable to him. He is her closest friend and nearest relative, as well as her collaborator in achieving dharma. She would never desire anything in which she cannot jointly participate along with him. But the necessary concomitant of this Ideal is that of Ekapatnivrata. He who follows the latter has firm and steadfast love for his wife (sthiranuraga) and would, moreover, care for her as a parent would for his offspring. She would be his companion for life and dearer to him than his own life (pranaih priyatara, pranebhyopi gariyasi). Without her he would find even heaven with its nymphs desolate. For him none else including his own parents would be dearer than her. He would not even think of enjoying any woman excepting his own wife; and if she were to predecease him he would remain chaste. (Tamrute...aham na bhokshye yoshtam kamcit, declared Ritadhwaja.) Sita of Valmiki claimed that Rama loved no one else more than her, nay, he did not even love anyone else equally! (*Ramayana*, Sundara Kanda, XXXVI, 30).\* According to Tiruvalluvar, Ekapatnivrata exemplifies 'noble manliness', 'real heroism' and perfect virtue\*.

According to the *Mahabharata*, the wife is the husband's best friend (Suhridam vara) ordained by destiny (bharya daivakritah sakha). It further says: one's dear wife is greater than one's life (pranebhyopi gariyasi); she should be protected like one's mother and respected like one's elder sister. This Itihasa also asserts that as is oneself so is one's son, and a daughter is equal to a son. (Putrena duhita sama.) Everything must be given to a daughter; those parents, brothers, in-laws etc., who desire prosperity should treat girls/women with respect and affection. (pujyah lalayitavyah ca.)

\* This whole paragraph is based primarily on *Ramayana*, Aranyakanda, Ayodhya-kanda; and *Mahabharata*, Aranya-*parva*, & *Ritadhvaja*-*Madalasa* story of Mar-kandeya *Purana*.

+ T.P. Minakshisundaran, *Philosophy of Tiruvalluvar*, Madurai, 1969, p. 69.

Women are indeed Lakshmis; he who desires prosperity must honour them. (Sriyah etah striyo nama, satkarya bhutimichhata.) (*Mahabharata*. Anusasanaparva, 45, 46.) At one place this work says with approval that Manu did not applaud the practice of women living with husbands whom they disliked; they can remarry, it implies. (same parva.)

Of course, the Fifth Veda has sections/passages which say that there is nothing more sinful than women, and that they are the root of all evil, (*Mahabharata*, Anusasana Parva, ch. 38.) A number of religious tracts and teachers have said that it is Kamini-Kanchana (woman and gold) which lead men astray, and that men should always avoid them. This is part of our "inglorious tradition" as are the caste system, untouchability etc. But there is no culture or tradition in which there is not something 'inglorious'.

## Marriage, an European achievement ?

The composite ideal of Ekapatnivrata-Pativratyā is nothing but the institution of marriage in which both the partners practise life-long mutual mental and physical fidelity. I do not know why so great a thinker and poet with an encyclopaedic knowledge as Goethe declared "marriage is the greatest achievement of European culture", and why so eminent a scholar and well-read man as Denis de Rougemont has claimed marriage is "the institution most typical of European morals". Maybe Goethe did not come across characters other than those like Dushyanta in the Indian literature he was acquainted with, and de Rougemont knew well only about Tantrics from Eliade's work. While the classical Indian and European-Christian cultures acclaimed stable marriage as the ideal man-woman relationship, it is recognized as such by the Marxists also. "Monogamic unions", according to Engels, "provide the most sensible relation between the sexes in a society that has been emancipated from the restraint of money and class". Lenin strongly disapproved promiscuity and sexual lawlessness terming them "petit bourgeois". (de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, Rev. & Aug. Edn. with postscript, Princeton, 1983, pp. 287-3, 289.) Bela Kopeczi, a distinguished scholar who is also the Hungarian Minister of Culture and Education, has pointed out, on the basis of empirical surveys, that the Family was identified as the

preeminent value by Europeans in both the socialist and non-socialist countries. (his article in the *New Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, no. 104, 1986.) It is not surprising that Gorbachev and his colleagues as well as some American leaders are emphasizing ethics and values, especially, family integrity.

### Fatal, passionate, unfulfilled Love, UnIndian !

Before it came into contact with Europe, India never knew fatal passionate love ever unfulfilled—such as that found in the *Tristan and Iseult* romance, but given its final form in Wagner's *Tristan Und Isolde*. It knew fickle sensuality of the type which found its most effective expression in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. But it always condemned it. Its great ideal has been that embodied in upakhyanas like *Nala-Damayanti* and *Savitri-Satyavan* and Valmiki's great *Sita Charita*. According to it, as a Sangam poet said, the spouses would have two bodies, but one soul and life'. Let us not abandon it till a better one is found.

### Women & Freedom

Present thinking in the world has gone much beyond what prevailed when Simone de Beauvoir published her *The Second Sex* and Beatty Friedan her *The Feminine Mystique*. As you will admit, the first was truly the first feminist and with the second began Women's Liberation Movement in USA. There is no one dimensional oppression in marriage as de Beauvoir thought, if marriage is understood in the way indicated above. In her very recent second book *The Second Stage*, Freidan is pleading for "the articulation of the values of family and life itself", and now thinks feminism does not require the denial of difference between women and men. Germaine Greer is doing her best to show that old Eastern societies have not marginalised women, that feminist movements (through family planning etc.) might lead to weakening of family ties, loneliness of women, rejection of children, and destruction

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+ Irutalai-p-pullin oruyiramme.

of the balance among individual needs, rights and freedom, societal structure, natural laws and the future of civilization. (*Sex and Identity*) Lastly, the myth of women ever having been the gentle sex and ever having had a monopoly on compassion and peace has been effectively exploded by Jean Bethke Elshtain. (*Women and War*)

*Andhra Pradesh Open University*

30 IV 1988

**Lifelong Education**

Our National Open University, this pioneering State Open University and others like it established subsequently may continue to provide distance education at various levels, applying a multi-media approach during the entire learning process, based on the planning, guidance and tuition of a number of academics. In addition to this, it may be appropriate for them as well as all concerned with education in our country not only to be aware of, among others, ideas subsumed under the rubric Lifelong Education, but to attempt to implement them insofar as they are found acceptable and good. One need not exclusively and for ever depend on Johan Dewey, Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, nor even on Tagore and Gandhi, or on Radhakrishnan and Zakir Hussain, in the formulation of educational ideals and practices. No mortal is omniscient and infallible, and there can be no policies and programmes which are perfect and immutably correct. Practical wisdom is often the result of a heated and direct clash of many different viewpoints.

The idea of a permanent, free and continuing education is as old as Plato. The important thing now is to make it universally accessible. The world around is changing rapidly, thereby affecting men's relationship with it. Consequently, men do not know how to maintain harmony within themselves, with others and with nature, as the atrophied and unsuitable education systems in vogue are unable to show them ways of transcending changes and leading whole lives. The need is to equip men individually and collectively to understand, control and dominate politico-economic development as well as technological progress. Aware of what man's existence is in the social and natural world today and foreseeing as it will be tomorrow, education, whether formal, non-formal or informal, should now enable all to acquire and enhance

enlightenment in the different stages and spheres of life. It is not mere extension of education that is required but its qualitative transformation. It is not enough to learn how to earn; it is necessary to learn how to learn as long as one lives.

Learn to be what and to do what, and how? This should be through all possible methods and techniques which will engender in all an unquenchable thirst for more and more knowledge not for accumulation, but for integration, deriving satisfaction only in perpetual inquiry and discovery, with a view to enrichment of life. This means a democratic and lifelong education, through contacts with reality which will develop individual autonomy as well as potentiality for cooperative and harmonious living. It should result at least in the increasing awareness of human unity, if not of the unity of all existence, and in the enhancement of the quality of life of both individuals and their collectives.

It should be suffused with a concern for the needs of the disadvantaged, oppressed, excluded or exploited groups. The gulf between the cultures of the landless labourers and industrial workers, and the disparity between the rural and urban people, and such other contradictions, should be overcome: the best type of education must be available to all. Whatever comes in the way of this—division of labour, specialisation, dependence, alienation and corporate subservience to economic systems, must be done away with.

For achieving what has been indicated above, the available material and human resources as well as the accumulated cultural experience of mankind must be organized so that everyone throughout his life continues to develop his capacities in order that he may first of all achieve inner harmony and contribute to the well-being and development of the nation of which he is a citizen, as well as of the universal Human Society of which too he is a member.

## Towards a common learning society

Apart from the usual type of universities, with or without

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\* For ideas in this & above two paragraphs I am indebted to: C.Rodriguez (prep.), *Lifelong Education*, 185, 4th quarter, 1972, Unesco, Paris; James Lunch, *Lifelong Education* etc., Unesco Inst. for Edn., Hamburg, 1977; and Ettore Gelpi, *A Future for Lifelong Education*, The University, Manchester, 1979.

correspondence courses, and open universities, there are a number of informal agencies that shape every society's thought, character and sensibility. For example, the family is an important agency through which a culture transmits itself across generations. Similarly, churches or religious orders, museums, radio and newspapers also educate people in different ways. In every case it is possible that education is socially controlling, manipulative or tranquillizing. So care must be taken that non-formalisation, vocationalisation or any such innovation would not result in differential education and categorization of recipients of education. Unless there is an effort to have common objective and to have coordination of different methods to achieve them, there will not emerge a common learning society. This implies that people who receive non-formal education and formal education, and those who graduate from different sorts of universities (universities like Madras, "rural universities" or "Sanskrit\Telugu universities") and from institutes of science\technology, should share a common world-view, if their thinking and action have to contribute to the harmonious development of individuals and the nation. One is not certain that this is being taken care of now; but it is important that this should be done if a common national consciousness is considered desirable.

## *On Headship of Universities\*\**

### I

This note expresses just an individual's views based on (1) his personal experience of and involvement in Indian university life from 1949 to 1984 (2) a number of visits over the years to universities in Europe, USA, USSR, and Asia, (3) readings in the philosophy of education and history of the origin and development of higher educational institutions in India and abroad, and (4) his supervision of some doctoral work in this field.

Some of the following ideas may appear heterodox and iconoclastic to many who take the *status quo* as divinely ordained or perfect, or who believe that the first commandment in academic organization ought to be "Nothing should ever be done for the first time". Yet, I hope this note will be tolerated by the powers that be.

### II

India was not benighted till the first three universities were established in the colonial period. Buddhist Jataka stories tell us about schools of higher education which flourished at Taxila and other places. Our two great epics, as well as works of Bana and others testify to the existence of magnificent ashramas (lit. abodes of shrama, work) in sylvan surroundings on outskirts of cities, which one can easily reach on chariots, and which were not isolated cottages or huts, poorly equipped and without property, in

\*\* Discussed in a meeting in H.R.D. Minister's room on 13-6-88 in which he, Chairman & Vice Chairman, UGC, and Education Secretary were present.

\* In his guide to aspiring academic politicians, *Microcosmographia Academica*, Cornford laid this down as an important dictum.

inaccessible jungles. They were comfortable establishments for study, reflection and investigation. There is archaeological, epigraphic and literary evidence for universities which had continued existence for some centuries at Amaravati and Sriparvata (Andhra Pradesh), Kanchipuram (Tamilnadu), Nalanda and Vikramasila (Bihar) and elsewhere. The heads of some of these like Nagarjuna, Aravana Adigal and Atisa were known in India and abroad and made original contributions to Indian thought and culture.<sup>+</sup> Almost from immemorial times there have been schools of higher learning at Varanasi,<sup>\*</sup> and in Pallava-Chola-Pandya periods schools of the same sort were founded and attached to some big temples. In the later middle ages some of the madrasahs established in India by sultans or their prime ministers (like the one at Bidar, estab. by Gawan in 1472, in Karnataka) became famous all over India and West and Central Asia.

All these institutions were patronised by rulers, their ministers, princes, merchants, and sometimes even by foreign rulers. But in the selection of teachers, admission of students, and election of their heads, no external authority had a say or a role; those who endowed these institutions—whether rulers or not—never sought to control them. State support for higher education, and yet complete autonomy of the institutions devoted to it—this is the authentic Indian tradition. Having a sovereign, viceroy, or governor as the titular head or supreme official of a higher educational institution came into vogue only in colonial India. The Satavahana, Pallava or Pala emperors would have been horrified if someone had suggested to them to be the supreme heads (Chancellors or Visitors) of the universities at Sriparvata, Kanchipuram or Nalanda; or if they had been asked to exercise the power to nominate their heads. All this, however, is an old story.

### III

Broadly speaking, we have in this country today affiliating

<sup>+</sup> It is a pity most of our Vice chancellors and persons in charge of higher education do not know much about their lives and work.

<sup>\*</sup> Dara Shikoh's teacher of Vedanta at Varanasi was a great pandit who headed a school with a vast library.

universities which also have postgraduate teaching and research at headquarters (modified London model), residential universities (imitations of Oxbridge), and another sort of residential universities (attempts at replicating Sussex-Essex type)\*. There are others which were established in the pre-Independence period by idealists who wanted indigenous models in tune with the history, ethos and needs of the nation, as they conceived them to be. But most of them have already more or less lost their original character and have begun moulding themselves after one of the patterns just mentioned, while protesting that such is not the case. In such circumstances they are rewarded by being deemed' as universities.

Among these, in the Central universities the President is the Visitor, as the Governor-General was of all universities till 1937; the Chancellor is nominated by the Visitor from among those suggested by the Executive Council; and the Vice Chancellor is nominated by the Visitor from a panel given by the nominees of himself, the government and the E.C. of the university. The inclusion or exclusion of names in such panels has often no obvious rationale. The Chancellor could be anyone : the Vice President, the Prime Minister, an ex-judge, ex-Maharajah, ex-diplomat, an eminent scientist or poet. So could, of course, be a Vice-Chancellor—scientist, scholar, civilian, ex-judge, ex-diplomat, or ex-politician. A Vice chancellor need not have taught, and done and supervised research! And, when a scientist or scholar is nominated, he need not be from the same university; one can be brought, say, from Madras to head a university in the north, or one can be sent from Banaras to head a university in the south : ostentatiously to secure national integraton and ensure objectivity in administration; and sometimes he may be from another university in the same state, ostensibly because he will be then impartial in his dealings! When a man from the same university is selected, it will be given out that there is a widespread feeling in the faculty that one of its own

\* See my article on Universities in Asa S. Knowles (ed.), *The International Encyclopaedia of Higher Education*, Vol. 5, San Francisco & London, 1977, pp. 2132-2142.

In some respects the information in it is dated.

\* M.C. Chagla was Vice Chancellor of Bombay University as well as Puisne Judge of Bombay High Court in 1946-47. He wrote that for him it has "an ordeal to preside over the Academic Council in particular. It dealt with all sorts of subjects about which I was totally ignorant". (his *Roses in December*, 1973, p. 341.) One wonders whether other diplomats, judges, civilians etc., who have been VCs could have been much more knowledgeable than Chagla.

members should be chosen. Who gauged this feeling and how would be known only to the powers that be. In other words, no logic or principle is easily discernible to most ordinary mortals in these matters.

A Vice Chancellor is the executive and academic head of a university; and as he does not in any way owe his position to the faculty or students, so long as he enjoys rapport with the Ministry and the UGC, he could afford to be non-democratic, if not a mini-dictator. A Chancellor can only preside over meetings of university court and over convocations : his is an ornamental office. The Visitor has the powers of causing an inspection or enquiry to be made into university affairs. But he has to act only on the advice of the government. During the first President's time itself, on two occasions "the Attorney General tendered legal advice that the President was always bound by the advice of government" both as Supreme Commander and as Visitor of Universities\*.

In almost all the State Universities, at present the Governor of the State is the Chancellor of all of them: Before native states were abolished, in the Nizam's state its Prime Minister was the Chancellor of Osmania, the Education Minister the Vice Chancellor, while an academic as Pro-Vice Chancellor carried on the administration. In the State of Travancore the Dewan was the Vice Chancellor, and an academic was the Pro-Vice Chancellor; the Chancellor was, if I remember right, the Maharani. Recently in Andhra Pradesh in the case of two universities, it has been legislated that the Chief Minister would be their Chancellor.

In the State universities, the Chancellor has the powers and privileges which Visitors and Chancellors have in Central Universities. According to the judgements of some high courts if a university act specifies that the Chancellor is an officer of a university who performs statutory functions assigned to him by that specific act, he is not bound by the advice of the council of ministers. Taking advantage of this in recent years Chancellors in some states have made appointments of vice-chancellors, contrary to the advice of their Chief Ministers and Education Ministers, and created problems for the universities and their appointees. To remove such a possibility, Andhra Pradesh has very recently

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\* B.C. Das, *The President of India* (with a Foreword by V.V. Giri), London, 1977, p. 114.

legislated that the Chancellor shall be bound by the advice of the State government. This makes the Chancellor's position similar to that of Visitor in Central Universities.

In most State universities also now the system of appointment of vice chancellors is similar to that obtaining in central universities.

Governors as Chancellors have not always behaved with dignity, objectivity and impartiality. In the past when some Chief Ministers, Dewans or high court judges were Chancellors or Vice Chancellors, they exercised their powers and discharged their duties in an admirable way. One cannot expect to have better Chancellors/Vice Chancellors than Sir Mirza Ismail, Justice Sir Ashutosh Mukherji, Sir Maurice Gwyer or Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer. So if governors are not chancellors, it will not be calamitous.

In 'deemed' universities Chancellors are elected either by the organisations which established and run them; or the 'god-men' who have founded them are Chancellors for life, while their successors have to be elected by their organisations/trusts. Some of these 'deemed' universities are as well managed as universities of which governors are chancellors.

#### IV

Not all British universities, but most, have Chancellors. In Oxford, Cambridge, London and Manchester, the Chancellor is elected for life by convocation, consisting of all those who have postgraduate degrees and paid prescribed fees. In Leeds the Chancellor is appointed by the Court on nomination of Council. In Sussex and Essex the Chancellor is elected by Court. In Scottish universities the Chancellor is elected by the General Council and holds office for life.

Oxford and Cambridge do not have Visitors. In a number of universities the Queen is the Visitor, viz. in Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, East Anglia, Exeter, Hull, Keele, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Reading, Sheffield, Southampton, Sussex and Wales. In Durham the Visitor is the Lord Bishop, in Cranfield Institute of Technology it is the Duke of Edinburgh, in Kent the Archbishop of Canterbury, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne the Lord Chancellor.

In some British universities the Vice Chancellor is appointed by the Council, usually on the recommendation of a joint committee of Senate and Council, or as in Oxbridge it is by rotation among Heads of colleges. In the former case it is till the retirement age, in the latter for 2 or 3 years.

In Germanies (both Federal & Democratic), throughout East Europe and in USSR, universities have only Rectors, elected every five years by the highest university body, viz. the Scientific Council in which 20% of the members are students. There is no one above Rectors, though elected persons have to be formally approved by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Thus in Europe there is no uniform pattern; in U.K. itself there is no one pattern.

## V

It may be useful to recapitulate what several Indian committees have said on this issue.

1. The University Education Commission (1948-49) said as several universities have come into existence in each state, the practice having the governor as the Chancellor of all may not work well. Each state may decide the matter for itself. The Vice Chancellor should be appointed on the recommendation of the Executive.
2. The Committee on Model Act for Universities (1964) opined that in the case of central universities the President and in the case of state universities the Governor should be the Visitor. He should have powers of inspection and enquiry; he should not be an officer of the university; and he should be a link between government and universities. Chancellorship should be an office of honour, elected by the court; the person elected should have eminence in public life. He could preside over convocations & ceremonial occasions and assist in settling conflicts & smoothing relations among university authorities.
3. The Education Commission (1964-66) expressed the same view.
4. The Committee on Governance of Universities and Colleges (1971) expressed the same view and tried to strengthen it with the additional argument that the State's authority should be exercised through the President or Governor, to avoid the possibility of direct intervention by government or its officials

in universities' functioning. According to it also, a distinguished citizen could be nominated Chancellor on the recommendation of the Executive Council. He will have no administrative responsibility, but only have the privilege of presiding over convocations.

5. The Committee to enquire into Working of Central Universities (1982) just reiterated that status quo may be preserved.

In view of the persons who presided over the committees/commissions mentioned in 2 to 4 (Radhakrishnan, Kothari and Gajendragadkar) and their composition, it might be wise to accept what they suggested.

## VI

First of all, I should like to point out that it would be good to have different types of universities in this vast sub-continent, as in U.K., and U.S.A. In U.K, there are at least these types : Oxbridge, Redbrick, Plateglass and the more recent ones like North Staffordshire, Sussex (shaped by Lords Lindsey, Lord Fulton etc.) In U.S.A. several university patterns are in vogue, new ones are being experimented with. It would be best if a Central Act does not lay down a fixed university pattern as the one to be followed throughout this country, and if no rigid mandatory guidelines on university governance are formulated and sought to be imposed. Wisdom is not the monopoly of the Central Government and UGC; there are some persons in every state and university whose concern for the good of the country and for qualitative improvement of education is not less than of those working in Delhi. Let there be a hundred innovations; let a hundred flowers bloom. Sri Aurobindo pointed out: If, on the one hand, the Union "armed with efficient powers, position and prestige, but limited to its proper rights and functions, at once controlling and controlled by the rest"; and, on the other hand, the States endowed with the awareness that they are the limbs of a vibrant whole, without which they are nothing, become cooperative partners in the building of a just and egalitarian society, peace and prosperity will prevail. (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Pondicherry, 1975, p. 343.)

In case some sort of advice or suggestion has to be given, let it be what Kothari-Gajendragadkar suggested: Let State univer-

sities have Governors as Visitors, without their being officers of universities, and let the relationship between them and elected governments be that between the President and the Central Government. Chancellors may be nominated by Governors on the recommendation of university ECs or elected by Courts.

But the more important thing is to have Vice Chancellors by rotation among professors or through election by the university community consisting of teachers and students. The system of having selection/search committee-panel is only a "fig leaf" covering up arbitrary decisions, in which there is no impartiality. This will bring in politics, some may argue. Is it not there now? Can politics be totally avoided by men who are, as Aristotle said, political animals? Through election process India has had some of the best VCs it ever had : Radhakrishnan, Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, C.R. Reddy. The whole of Eastern Europe and USSR are having elected VCs; England as some VCs by rotation and some by a sort of indirect election. Let India too opt for one of these, and see that universities become fully self-governing as they ought to be.

If any academic, civilian or politician says our universities are not at the level of those abroad and that therefore we cannot have elections or rotation for VCs here, it would remind one of the conservative argument in Pre-Independence days that India was not fit for Purna Swaraj but only for Dominion Status, or of the stand in some neighbouring countries that in this part of the world only guided democracy will succeed.

I earnestly request the minister and other authorities not to have a committee and a series of continuous seminars on this, but to decide this on the basis of the experience of ours & of other countries, the several reports and vast literature available. There is abundant material ready at hand for decision-making.

## XVI

# *Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth*

17 XII 1988

### Full Freedom

Tilak correctly explained an important Vedantic conception in his statements like: "What is Swaraj? A life centred in the Self and dependent upon the Self.—Swaraj is the natural consequence of diligent performance of duty". (Quoted in Ram Gopal, *Lokamanya Tilak: A Biography*, Bombay, 1956, pp. 344, 390.) But his original contribution was to bring out the political dimension of this conception: "What is Swaraj? It is replacement of bureaucracy by the people themselves—It is one's birthright to govern one's own house, none else can claim to do it." (Ibid., pp. 389, 390). "It is one's inherent right to fight for the liberty of his people, for a change in the government." (Quoted in N.G. Jog, B.G. Tilak, New Delhi, 1962, p. 119.)

It was the greatness of Tilak to have perceived that as man is a social and political being, he cannot have cognitive and metaphysical freedom while politically unfree. It is the first duty of a man not free to free himself. A slave cannot have Swaraj by just continuing to obey his master while contemplating on himself as the Ultimate Reality or the immortal universal Self. Such thinking should be preceded by discharge of his duty, which consists in first freeing himself from slavery. Then he can do Vedanta Vichara. Political and economic freedom is the external condition in which real internal metaphysical freedom can be realised. A nation ruled by another, or a people ruled by a bureaucracy, cannot have Swaraj by any amount of meditation. The svadharma (own-duty) of a slave is first to free himself from slavery, and the svadharma of a subject nation or an oppressed people is to first overthrow the imperial power or the despotic rule. Svadharma, well-performed for its own sake, makes one fit for the higher freedom: real Svarajya as conceived by the Upanishads. The Vedantic goal is to realize one's

own natural and authentic nature. Slavery and bondage, whether of an individual or of a nation, are unnatural and are obstacles to self-fulfilment. So they should first be destroyed.

Tilak was led to draw out the political implications of Vedanta by the teaching and life of Samarth Ramdas. Ramdas (1608-1681 A.D.) deeply felt the political conditions in Maharashtra and the misery of his people. He conceived of a "Region of Bliss" (in his work *Anandavana-bhuvana*) in which righteousness would be established after the destruction of the wicked and sinners. But the means for this, he taught, was performance of one's duty to oneself and one's nation after first setting one's heart firmly on God. His effort was to establish national greatness on the foundation of faith in God. (R.D. Ranade, *Mysticism in India, The Poet-Saints of Maharashtra*, Reprint, Albany, 1983, pp. 366-7, 422f.)

### The Mahatma was following the same tradition when he wrote

"It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves". (*Hind Swaraj*, 1938 Edn., Ch. XIV.) "The most real Swarajya is to rule over oneself—Sab se sacca swarajya to apne per sasan karna hai—That is the synonym of moksha or nirvana." (*Sampurna Gandhi Vanmaya*, Vol. 19, New Delhi, 1966, p. 82.) Like Tilak's his immediate goal was more practical, viz., political independence. But its fulfilment would be when every citizen of an independent nation becomes a moral being, achieving mastery over mind and passions, and, thereby comes to know himself. (*Hind Swaraj*, Ch. XIII.)

The essence of morality is self-control; morality is the means to self-knowledge, which results in perfect freedom, moksha. Politics must be that which creates conditions favourable to the "observance of morality" or "performance of duty", which, according to Gandhi, are "convertible terms". (op. cit.) This is a view in accordance with Indian tradition. The goal of the whole science of politics, Kautilya declared, is victory over the senses (indriya-jaya). (*Arthashastra*, 1.6.) This discussion of Swaraj may be concluded with Sri Aurobindo's magisterial utterance: True Swaraj is "fulfilment of the Vedantic ideal in politics". (*Speeches*, 3rd Edn, Pondicherry, 1952, p. 63.)

## Dharma, what fosters oneness among men & between men & Deity

If the Upanishads provided the Swaraj-ideology, another Vedantic text helped "to solve the moral issues involved in everyday life". (Tilak cited by Jog, *Ibid.*, p. 133.)

What, according to Tilak, is the substance of the teaching of the Gita? He himself summarised it as follows: The Gita teaches a dharma rooted in knowledge, mainly consisting of devotion and enjoining action appropriate for life-long performance. So, it harmonizes intellect, emotion and agency, and shows a way, which assures a smooth life in the world, which does not become an obstacle to liberation. Everyone should worship the Supreme Self, who though One is fully abiding in all beings,—in the micro- and macrocosms—through discharging his wordly duties throughout life, according to his competence, for the good of the world (*Lokasangraha*), without any desire, with the conviction that all are like oneself (*atmaupamya-drishti*) and with enthusiasm. Thus life becomes a continuous act of worship, of sacrifice. The dharma of the Gita, Tilak claims, is fearless, inclusive and equalitarian; it does not concern itself with national, racial or caste differences; and it leads all to the highest good and tolerates all other dharmas. (*Gitarahasya*, Telugu Trans., p. 696.) He chose as the epigraph for his concluding chapter (*upasamhara*) this text: "So, at all times remember Me and fight". (*Tasmat sarveshu kaleshu mam anusmara yudhya ca.*)

"The word Dharma", according to Tilak, "means a tie and comes from the root *dhri*, to bear or hold. What is there to hold together? To connect the soul with God, and man with man". Dharma is what fosters unity or oneness among men and between man and Deity. (His Address at Banaras, Jan., 1906. Quoted in Ram Gopal, *ibid.*, p. 243.)

Tilak's summary of the Gita Dharma is more or less in accordance with what is found in these two lines of the famous hymns attributed to Sankara:

Atmarpanadrusa, Saparyaparyahstava  
bhavatu yanme vilasitam.

Because of my self-surrender view, may all my enjoyment and action become a substitute for your service.

(*Ananda Lahari*)

Yadyatkarma karomi tattadakhilam Sambho tavaradhanam.  
Whatever action I do, all that is your worship.  
(*Sivamanasapuja*)

## What Is It to be Religious?

This Vidyapeeth's objective is to actualize Tilak's idea of national education: "That which gives us a knowledge of the experience of our ancestors, that which enables us to become true citizens and to earn our bread". (Quoted by Ram Gopal, *ibid.*, p. 239.) It should among other things be, he said, religious and through one's own mother tongue. What is it to be religious? To have reverence for Ideals, have devotion to the One Supreme Good, and to be humble with the awareness that Truth is infinite and cannot be encompassed by the human intellect, and to endeavour to lead a life devoted to the welfare of the world. Trusting that it is education of this sort which is sought to be inculcated here, I offer my felicitations to the faculty for what they may have achieved. In an undertaking like this spectacular success is impossible. But the Vice-Chancellor and faculty may be heartened by constantly remembering "Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhaya" (Even a little of this dharma protects from great fear).

## XVII

### *Annamalai University*

20 XII 1988

#### **The Sovereign Dancer Concept**

If mysticism, metaphysics and art have any meaning, truth of utmost profundity has been sought to be conveyed through the Nataraja image, the Tevaram and later writings of Kashmir and Tamilnadu. But do they have any meaning? I have an inkling they have, while some claim they are certain they have; but no one can prove or disprove this. In his Nobel Lecture Richard Feynman pointed out that "a very great deal more truth can become known than can be proven".

I have discoursed about what alone can make life most meaningful. There are times when reflective persons feel that life has meaning and other times when they feel it to be meaningless. On latter occasions some may have desperately sought to make life meaningful. But both those who find life meaningful and those who find it meaningless would find it impossible to say precisely what the meaning of life is.

If one recalls eternity and all the ages that are no more and the living present with all its noise, as Leopardi wrote, one's thinking sinks, drowned in this immensity, and it may appear to one sweet to get shipwrecked in this sea. If this is taken as the central basic experience, life indeed is a shipwreck. Compared with the infinite silence and most profound calm beyond the vastness of space, what is present sound, say, of wind blowing through branches? Cosmological awe may make one experience the triviality, the worthlessness and the senselessness of existence in particular. Yet, at a number of times and on many occasions, one does feel that in thoughts, words or actions-or even in all three-one has been able to achieve something wonderful and worthy which suffuses one with an unaccountable and unfathomable feeling that one's own existence is something necessary, justified and meaningful and that everything is all right.

In ethical striving as well as in the experience of the Sublime and the Beautiful, man experiences an inexpressible harmony between himself and all else. Such experience is of the vibration—the *spandana*—of what is in the depths of man's interior any in the depths of exterior. Why should not the blissful experience of goodness, beauty and harmony be taken as central and basic, and the universe taken (1) as rooted in the Reality that contains them within itself in an organic unity, and (2) as made up of different movements or vibrations of it? If so conceived, the universe is nothing but the delightful resonating vibration, the rhythmic movement, of the Good and the Auspicious: the Ananda Tandava of Siva. As the Upanishads declare: Reality is Ananda (Bliss). From it all beings have come forth, by it are they sustained and into it they pass; whatever is manifest is a form of immortal Bliss. Poet-seers like Manikkavacagar, philosophers like Abhinavagupta and the numberless unknown sculptors and painters who fashioned the images of the Sovereign of Dance attempted to make this conception intelligible in different ways.

## On Religious Belief

One may ask, is all this not just an elaboration or expression of religious vision? Yes, so it is. And, one may remember what Whitehead said:

"Apart from religious vision, human life is a flash of occasional enjoyments lighting up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience".

Science cannot deal with intrinsic values and the qualitatively immeasurable; it cannot touch the problems of life; and its method rejects teleological interpretation of phenomena. Poetry, art and religion are concerned with these which science leaves out. Science does not comprehend all reality, nor do these. All these together, taken in an integral way, allow us to have an access to Reality as a whole, and not just to aspects of it.

To be religious is to be natural; to be religious is to make one's

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\* Anando brahmeti etc. Anandarupam amrutam yad vibhasti.

life purposeful and rewarding. Sociobiologists have pointed out that "the predisposition to religious belief is the most complex and powerful force in the human mind", and is "in all probability ineradicable". (E.O. Wilson, *On Human Nature*, New York, 1978, p.176.) What "characterizes 'modernity' is loss of faith in transcendence". (Peter Berger) This is not justified either by logic or science, and it is calamitous. "In developed societies", it has been observed, "education has contributed to the decline of religious belief" (Edward Norman); and keeping such societies in view it has also been commented that "the deepest indictment of the university is that it erodes belief". (Robert Bellah) Let not our universities lead our youth into such a nihilistic Sahara. The alternative to nihilism is religion. Secular humanism too, as the U.S. Supreme Court pointed out, is religion, as it is a matter of "ultimate concern". The myth, poetry, arts and romance of traditional religion is preferable to this dry, colourless new species of religion.

One of the greatest rationalists and revolutionaries of modern India, M.N. Roy, rightly wrote that:

he preferred a religious, compassionate, ethical and civilized man to a barbarian neanderthal of 20th century. It, he continued, with the help of religion, ethical consciousness can be awakened in peoples' lives, what's the objection to that? (*Radical Humanist*, January 24, 1954.)

I cannot place before our youth any ideal greater than that which the Nayanars propagated: Universal Love, the same as *karuna* which the Buddha preached, and *agape* which Christ taught. The first urged cultivation and practice of universal love because Siva, the Auspicious and the Good, abides inseparably in all; the second discovered *karuna* is enjoined because the Unconditioned is of the nature of *prajna* and *karuna*; and the third because all human beings are children of one and the same God, Our Father in Heaven. Sankaracharya sang:

"In you, me and elsewhere is the One Vishnu.  
Intolerant of me, you are angry meaninglessly. So,  
become equal-minded everywhere towards all".  
Bhava samachittah sarvatra tvam.

I may be excused for my inability to place before you all anything more radical and original than this old-fashioned thing: Universal love, *karuna* or *agape*.

## XVIII

### *All-India Oriental Conference*

5 I 1989

#### **Who is a Pandit?**

In organisations like the Indian Philosophical Congress, Indian History Congress and Indian Sociology Congress etc., most of their members would be specialists in the concerned sciences who have received a Western type of education. In this Conference also there would be specialists in History, Archaeology, Linguistics etc. But I believe that here the majority of members must have received a traditional type of education in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Arabic or Persian and in the sciences for which these languages were the media.

Among us present here how many are really fit to be called "Pandits"? In this discourse it may not be inappropriate to consider the meaning of the word "Pandit". From the etymology of this word it is known that its meaning is higher and deeper than the meanings of words like 'Budha' and 'Vidvan'.

This word occurs four times in the *Bhagavadgita*. Twice a definition is given and twice the characteristics of "Pandit" are mentioned.

We will consider the definitions first. The Gita declares: (1) "Pandits do not sorrow either for the living or the dead" (II.11). Commenting on this, Sankaracharya has explained the etymology of this word thus: "*Panda* means decisive knowledge regarding the Self. Only those who have it are Pandits". (2) "He whose actions have been burnt up by the fire of knowledge is called a Pandit by the wise" (*Gita*, IV. 19). This is explained as follows by the *Bhashya*: "To see non-action etc. in action etc. is knowledge. That is fire; actions which are of the nature of good and bad are burnt up by it; in whomever this occurs is really a Pandit—so say the wise". Thus the word "Pandit" was defined. We will now go on to note the characteristics of a 'Pandit'. (3) "Only the foolish, not

the Pandits, say that Sankhya and Yoga are different" (V.4). In this sentence, according to the Acharya, "Pandits are the wise who want only a single non-contrary result of both Sankhya and Yoga". (4) Lastly, there is the text "Pandits are the seers of the Same" (V.18). This has been explained by Sankara as follows: "The Absolute is totally untouched by qualities and their effects. It is the Same, i.e. one and unchangeable. Those whose nature it is to see the Same are Pandits". From this it follows that the word "Pandit" connotes a great person who has ascended to the highest level of knowledge.

There is a popular verse: Skillfulness (chaturya) has its roots in five factors—"travel in different countries, friendship with Pandits, hetaira, access to courts and delving into different sciences". As chaturya is considered to have its roots in Panditya also, their concomitance is implied. Chaturya is synonymous with wisdom (vaidagdhyā), a deep understanding of the world and sciences. Vatsyayana in the beginning of the *Kamasutra* and Rajasekhara in *Kavya Mimamsa* (Ch. X) have described the nature of a civilised man (nagarika) as consisting of: knowledge of the ways of the world, closeness to society, gentleness, goodness, ability to enjoy beauty in different arts, sweet talk and universal fraternity. Acquisition of these is chaturya or vaidagdhyā.\* Panditya is a means for it.

So those who would like to be entitled "Pandits" ought to acquire interdisciplinary knowledge as well a knowledge of the world's ways, along with a vision of the Same. Then only their Panditya would be perfect. The ideal of "Pandit" appears to be higher than that of Newman's "Gentleman" and Fichte's "Scholar" and the general Western conception of "Intellectual".

In this country there were some Pandits who, without caring for support from kings and feudal lords and indifferent to all difficulties, devoted all their time to study, teaching, thinking and writing. Two examples may be mentioned. There was Vachaspati, a polymath and great thinker who, the story goes, was so engrossed in writing his commentary on Sankara's *Brahmasutra Bhashya* that even when dusk fell he continued his work, and when later his wife came with a light he asked "who are you"? When she identified herself, he felt sorry for being so oblivious and immortal-

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\* This may be rightly identified with skill in action, Karmasu kausalam (Gita, II, 50).

ised her by naming the commentary after her as Bharnati. Another such great scholar and poet was Vedantadesika who utterly dedicated himself to scholarly and creative work, living in poverty, while declaring his sole wealth was He who was the Lord of the Goddess of wealth and the ornament of the chariot of the conqueror of wealth (Dhananjaya, i.e. Arjuna). We hear that a few scholars of this type existed till the beginning of this century even in Andhra. But now such persons are an extinct species.

Such people did not acquire knowledge and did not teach for the sake of livelihood, money or fame..For them study, investigation and enlightening others were ends in themselves. To follow them may be very praiseworthy, but it is utterly impossible for the majority of mankind.

### **Indian Culture, not solely Brahmanical & Sanskritic**

What is today called Indian Culture arose and developed out of the interaction of Aryans, Dravidians and other autochthonous peoples. In this culture Sramanic sub-culture has as much importance as Brahmanic sub-culture, because Jainism and Buddhism are also components of this culture. Like Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and other languages are treasure-houses of knowledge. Indian Culture developed in such close contact with Islamic Culture since mediæval times and with Western Culture in modern times that these got ingested by it. Thus it was enriched further in every way. So the opinion of some that Indian Culture is only Brahmanic sub-culture available in Sanskrit alone is baseless. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Sanskrit is also a repository of Sramanic Dharma. As such, Indological Studies should include all these languages and their literatures as well as the matters connected with worldly prosperity and the ultimate good and with scientific facts and metaphysical theories.

### **No country has a monopoly of knowledge & wisdom**

Even today in India there are two types of educated persons! Some declare that all knowledge and wisdom is to be found in the Indian corpus and that nothing need be accepted from any-

where else. On the other hand, some insist that all that has come down through Indian languages is useless and unscientific, that it is a waste of time to study it, and that all scientific knowledge especially is to be acquired from the West. Both these positions are rooted in ignorance.

Ancient Indians by their own efforts discovered and explained many scientific facts and formulated comprehensive philosophical systems. They borrowed much from other nations and they developed further what they borrowed. Other nations too learnt many things from Indians. What Acharya Varahamihira said should be acceptable to all reasonable people: "The Yavanas may be mlecchas", but they have a firm grasp of science. So even they should be respected as rishis (sages)". Similarly, Bhaskaracharya maintained that what is rational alone should be accepted, and nothing merely on the basis of some person's authority. Whoever is in quest of knowledge and truth must do both: to discover new facts by one's own intelligence and observation, and to learn from others what is unknown to him.

If the scientific method followed by Charaka, Susruta, Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Brahmagupta and others had been followed by later Indians without a break, then the scientific development which occurred in Europe from the 17th century would have taken place in India much earlier.

Now there is in our country a group of scholars who go on repeating what is to be found in ancient tomes, believing that thereby they are achieving something great. They are like the legendary parrots in cages in the courtyard of Mandanarnishra. Many Pandits in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Tibetan Pathashalas and many Ulemas in Arabic and Persian Maktavas are wandering in their own dream world, alienated from social, political and scientific realities and knowledge. Though they are physically in the atomic age, their mental existence is not contemporaneous. So, unable to enter into the mainstream of presentday Indian life, with their traditional knowledge they are unable to help themselves or others. It is necessary for this Conference to make an effort to reverse this tendency.

In India there is also another group of scholars who have never even got a scent of the contents of ancient books, not known to

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\* Foreigners not conforming to the Hindu way of life.

others, and yet condemn them as useless. This sort of tendency also should be eradicated. Some modern physicists are deriving inspiration from Indian philosophical conceptions and doctrines for formulating a holistic unification theory. Some scientists connected with computers and artificial intelligence are carefully studying our grammar and logic for possible fruitful insight. Indian medicine also may be of help to modern medical science. There is a great and immediate necessity to bring into the open the profound and permanently valuable philosophic and scientific principles from within the depths of Indian inheritance.

## XIX

# *Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati*

15 IV 1989

I believe everyone here knows that from my childhood I have been a student and lover of Sanskrit. Sanskrit learning has to a considerable extent shaped my outlook. Consequently, anything that I say will be in the capacity of one who cherishes Indian culture and Sanskritic tradition.

### **A Real University**

To begin with, I should like to express some personal views about institutions of Sanskrit studies, which may be universities or deemed universities. What can a Sanskrit university, like that at Varanasi or like this here, do? It can preserve, disseminate among contemporaries and transmit to posterity, knowledge that is available in Sanskrit; and more importantly, in addition it can communicate through Sanskrit to the present and future generations new discoveries its teachers may be able to make. Alternatively, in the way in which some Indian universities today use English, Hindi or Telugu as media of instruction, Sanskrit universities can use Sanskrit as the medium. In either case there seems to be nothing odd about a Sanskrit university. If so, can one logically disapprove the establishment of a Urdu university or a Hindi university, or that of a Pali or Prakrit university? We have indeed a university for Tamil and deemed universities for Tibetan and Jain studies.

A Sanskrit university or a Pali university, for instance, will not really be a university if it only promotes the learning of those languages, and literatures in them. But if they are concerned with different sciences for which these languages have been used as vehicles, and if these languages are used as the vehicles for original thinking in different branches of knowledge, then certainly

a Sanskrit or Pali university would be a real university. The objection to something being called a university should not be exclusively on the basis of its having a single faculty, but, more fundamentally, on its not doing any really original work. An institution which merely preserves and perpetuates an inherited body of knowledge ought not to be called a university. A real university should not only preserve and transmit, but also increase the available corpus of knowledge, in howsoever a small way. Institutions which are unable to creatively and critically assimilate inherited knowledge and to expand the frontiers of knowledge have no business to be called universities. It is only by this standard universities should be judged.

### All Languages Equal

In this connection, it should be emphasized there is no divine or diabolical language. All languages are human. I know Hindu orthodoxy of a particular sort claims Sanskrit to be divine and mother of all languages. On the other hand, the great scholar Buddhaghosha has claimed Magadhi to be the primordial language as well as the language of gods. Similar claims have been made by others for different languages. All these claims cancel out each other. It may be good to remember what a great and wise devotee Ekanatha said:

"If Sanskrit was made by God, was Prakrit born of thieves and knaves? Let these errings of vanity alone...God is no partisan of tongues. To him Prakrit and Sanskrit are alike".

The Paramacharya of Kanchi has rightly said:

"Sanskrit and Tamil are equal. It cannot be said that one is superior to the other. The reason is that the Veda is in Sanskrit and *Tirukkural* is in Tamil. *Tirukkural* is Tamil Veda".

Sanskrit and Tamil are not the only languages which contain the Veda (divine revelation, eternal knowledge). It is to be found in Hebrew and Arabic also.

## Exclusivism to be eschewed

Exclusivism and parochialism which maintain that a particular country, nation or language alone possesses eternal and saving knowledge have no logical basis. They are against human equality and brotherhood. It is they which lead to intolerance. No scripture contains all truth; no scripture is free from errors; and all scriptures abound in timeless truths as well as assertions based on ignorance and prejudice. Divine revelation has been continuous; it is progressive. The Upanishads disclosed truths not found in the Samhitas; and the works of Sathakopa and Manikyavachaka revealed truths about the Divine not contained in the earlier two. Revelation was not non-existent at any time and it has not stopped. The acceptance of this position enables one to transcend national, religious and linguistic prejudices. It is usually held that pathasalas and madrasas are more often and to a greater extent the bastions of views and beliefs which contradict logic, science and history. These institutions should make every effort to dispel such a notion about them.

## Classical Studies

Clinging to texts, writing expository commentaries on them or so-called editing of them cannot be the only types of classical research. Creative reinterpretation of texts, logical analysis, constructive criticism, (philological and historical)—these are important. Editing of texts does not mean copying of manuscripts with just variant readings, and sending them to the press. Editing of texts, if undertaken, should be done in the way Shukthankar and Belvalkar edited the *Mahabharata*, or Kosambi the *Satakas* of Bhartrihari. It should also be remembered that not every medieval manuscript, so far unpublished, deserves to be published. There are also unpublished manuscripts on pseudo-sciences and on irrational religious doctrines and practices which it would be wise not to publish.

In all institutions devoted to classical and medieval studies, especially in South Asia and West Asia, authoritarianism prevails. A teacher, in these institutions, is usually accepted as infallible. His teaching is never questioned, and not subjected to critical

scrutiny. No human being can ever utter complete and final truth. An ideal student should emulate Prabhakara, who according to tradition, differed from his teacher Kumarila and started his own school of thought, and Sri Ramanuja who refuted his guru Yadvaprakasa's scriptural interpretations and propounded original ones of his own. As Anandabodha said, "an acharya too may make a mistake; what's wrong?" Acharyasyapi skhalitameva va. Ko doshah? (*Nyayamakaranda*, Banaras, 1907, p. 357.)

## Egalitarian & Scientific Ideas in Classics

Lastly, it is usually forgotten that classical languages like Sanskrit and Greek have been vehicles of some scientific and humanistic ideas which are of value and relevance even now. Often these are mixed up with what are contradictory to them. Some profound thinkers of our country who taught ontological equality of all beings have also taught human inequality based on birth. The greatest Greek thinkers supported slavery and considered all peoples other than Greek as barbarians. It was given to the people of our country whose languages were non-Sanskritic to proclaim for the first time the equality and fraternity of all human beings (*Purananuru*, poem no. 192). A clear enunciation of the concepts of the whole world constituting one family (vasudhaiva kutumbakam) and altruistic love (nishprayojana vatsalya) are to be found in Sanskrit for the first time in the *Hitopadesa* (900 A.D?) and *Panchatantra* (Gupta period)? These owe their development from the ideas expressed in a classic composed in the "language of the ghouls", (the *Brihatkatha* written in Paisachi) and in Sangam poetry. It is ideas like these and the scientific insights found in our treatises on logic, grammar, medicine, astronomy, mathematics etc., which should be widely propagated by our institutions devoted to classical scholarship.

*Kashmir University*

9 IX 1989

**Indian Unity**

Over the years I have been, whenever possible, drawing attention to what some anthropologists and sociologists have shown: Indian civilization was formed by a number of processes which related diverse elements, and was consolidated through an interaction of popular lore and reflective thought. India could be considered as a separate and definable culture area, with a distinct and definable civilization with local and regional manifestations. The people of India may be classified as Indo-Dravidian and not as members of any European or Asiatic race. Alternatively, Indian population may be considered as constituting essentially a basic type (Palaeo-Mediterranean or Mediterranean), with regional variations. The Indian languages, though belonging to the families of Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Sino-Tibetan speech families, influenced each other, fused and developed common traits, giving rise to a pan-Indian type in language. So, India is a linguistic area. It has been also pointed out that there is a common Indian religious approach and philosophy of life.

**Indian Culture**

When this is recognised, one would NOT wholly identify Indian culture with what is found in the Veda-Dharma Shastra-Itihasa-Purana tradition, and Indian philosophy with the Brahmanical Shad-darsanas and, much less, with Vedanta alone. A hierarchical system of castes with priests dominating it and a world-negating mystical philosophy emanating from forest abodes are sought to be established by some as the core of Indian civilization. That was never the case. The Buddhist, Jaina and Lokayata

philosophies are as much Indian and valuable as the Vedic. The Sangam literature and the hymns of Alvars and Nayanars constitute an equally important and valuable component of our intellectual and spiritual tradition. The Artha- and Kama- shastras are also shastras not inferior to Dharma-shastras. Dharma, artha and kama (morality, prosperity and pleasure) have to be equally cultivated. "Dharmarthakamah samameva sevyah". (*Mahabharata*, the fifth Veda.) This is the classical Indian view.

## Supreme Knowledge gifted to all Peoples

Divine revelation is contained not only in Sanskrit scriptures, but in Hebrew and Arabic sacred books also, and saving wisdom is not to be found only in the Sanskrit sources but also in the Pali, Prakrit and Aramaic ones. No race, country, nation or language had ever the monopoly of revelation or saving knowledge. Moreover, revelation has been continuous and progressive. The Upanishads disclosed truths not found in the Samhitas, and the Bhagavadgita proclaims truths not contained in the earlier two, while the Bhagavata unveils aspects of Divine Realtiy and Action about which the former holy books did not speak of.

This position has not been expounded with greater force anywhere else than in Kashmir. Utpala enunciated the theoretical basis for it: "Tatram tattvamekam. The inner reality in all is one. From this Kshemaraja deduced: "Tadbhumikah sarvadarsanasthitayah." All philosophical positions are the roles of that one reality, the one independent principle, Consciousness. Kshemaraja had the vision and courage to explain that materialism, Buddhism, Vedanta etc., including his own doctrine, are only different displays, free self-expressions, of the one principle, Consciousness. This means there is only one all-inclusive IDEA which manifests itself in the several ideas and combination of ideas or theoretical formulations.

While in the far north of India, in the Himalyan regions, this truth was being proclaimed thus in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D., at approximately the same time it was also being asserted in the far south of our country, in the Dravida plains irrigated by the Kaveri and Payoshni rivers. The *Bhagavata* teaches: Just as one and the same thing having a plurality of qualities is apprehended

by the senses in multiple ways, the one and the same god is presented by the shastras in different ways. "Ekonaneyate tadvat Bhagavan sastravartmabhihi". Elsewhere, the same text has these beautiful words: The Supreme person is of the nature of Pure Awareness hidden within us; His nature is such that it is in accord with all doctrines. "Srvavadavishayapratirupasilam—mahapurushamatmanigudhabodham".

In the 14th century Kashmir flourished that great spiritual personality, Lalla Yogisvari, popularly known as Lal Ded or Lal Didi, whose sayings, considered to be "pearls and diamonds" of Kashmiri literature, "moulded the national mind and set up a national ideal". "She was, in fact, a predecessor of the Mediaeval Reformers of India—Ramananda, Kabir and the others-of the 15th and later centuries". She is, thus, very important in the history of Hinduism. Lalla found after much searching the Self, the Lord, in her own soul. Consequently, knowledge and light suffused her whole being. Seeing the Self is near and He is all, one may engage oneself in one's own profession or work whatever it is and yet find Freedom In Action. Spiritual progress is possible for anyone who works without thinking of self and lays all that he does before the self, "setting faith and duty before self". She taught: "Shiva shines everywhere; do not discriminate between a Hindu and a Muslim: If you are wise recognize yourself and know the Lord."

The fact that there is only One True Light was not recognized only by the Indians. One of the greatest mystics and sages of the world, Jalalul-din Rumi (13th century) wrote: "The lamps are different, but the Light is the same: it comes from Beyond. If thou keep looking at the lamp, thou art lost: for thence arises the appearance of number and plurality. Fix thy gaze upon the Light". Earlier than Rumi, another great mystic and sage, Ibn Arabi (late 12th century) taught that in every form of belief about God He manifests himself. Everyone conceives God according to his own idea, not out of his knowledge. A believer praises the God who is in the form of his belief, with whom he has entered into relation. So, according to Ibn Arabi, a believer who criticizes others' beliefs shows his ignorance.

## Azad & Iqbal

It is fortunate that our subcontinent produced two such great

men as Abul Kalam Azad and Muhammad Iqbal. "Their thinking is the culmination of all that the Muslim community of the sub-continent has contributed to reflection on Islam and the modern world over almost two centuries".

Analysing the philosophies of Tagore and Iqbal, S. Abid Husain concluded that "in the depths of Indian mind, two streams of religious consciousness spring from the same source and flow in the same channel, so that no real differentiation is possible between them. It is only on coming to the surface—they divide into two distinct streams taking different courses, known under the name of the Hindu and Muslim religions". Husain adds that they meet again in social, moral and aesthetic life.

In Azad is found, wrote Rahah Nabi Khan, the beginning of a true synthesis of modernity, secularism, democracy, universalism and Islam. Islam's message is the same as that of other prophets to all nations and races. In Azad's view the essence of all religions is Islam. He formulated "on the basis that is orthodox and Islamic", continues Khan, "the most tolerant and essentially modern view of religious tolerance and the autonomy of the individual conscience in the matters of religion".

## Rationality, first priority

Our nation has just concluded the celebration of S.Radhakrishnan's birth centenary, and is going to start that of Jawaharlal Nehru. To narrate the following episode now is relevant. In a meeting held in Rastrapati Bhavan for the presentation of Sri Aurobindo's portrait, Radhakrishnan referred to the following Upanishadic passage "Human beings of great intellectual power have doubts, divisions and discords. The rational man has to grow into the spiritual man. That is the task set to each individual if he is to fulfil his destiny as a human being". Nehru who was present and sat silent with closed eyes is reported to have said: This is the essence of philosophy and science; what else is there?

The Upanishad might have asked us to become spiritual. Many of us have not yet become even rational. Let us first become that; later we can think of growing into the spiritual. "The most vigorous and liberal thinker in Islam", Al-Razi (865-925) exhorted that

everyone ought "to search and consider religious law to the limit of his strength and power", for whoever does so in a sustained way will arrive at the right goal". Even if someone fails, "God is more likely to forgive and pardon him as He does not require of anyone what is beyond his capacity".

I commend Al-Razi's wise and humane counsel to all the young men and women who have taken their degrees just now.

[References in the original omitted here.]



## FROM THIS BOOK

"True values ought to be universal and in no way opposed to science and technology. If reason, as the criterion, critique and guide of authority and tradition, and selfconscious faith lead our lives, they will become free and enlightened.

Education ought to give coherence and unity to one's interests and intentions, and impart the power of understanding and judgement. Then only one can comprehend the interplay of ideas, forces and events, chart in some fashion their direction and obtain a glimmer of their meaning.

India is a separate and definable cultural and linguistic area; its population is of Palaeo-mediterranean type; and it has a common religious approach. While the Autochthonous, the Sramanic-Pali-Prakritic, the Srauata-Sanskritic, etc. constituted the components of classical Indian culture, through an Arya Dravida-Kirata-Nishada symbiosis, in medieval and modern times West Asian and Western patterns of faith and ways of life have enriched it by their contributions."